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ABSTRACT

This workbook provides school administrators a structured process to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate curriculum alignment. Based on the text "Deciding What to Teach and Test," the book outlines specific steps a facilitator can take to translate ideas into action. It is organized into a series of chapters that were written with the assumption that the work can be completed during a 3- to 4-month period. Each chapter contains a set of activities designed to build on the work accomplished in previous sessions, and the level, purpose, materials, estimated time of completion, and participants are outlined at the beginning of each activity. The first chapter focuses on understanding the concept of alignment and addresses such issues as becoming familiar with videotape, focus and connectivity, site-based decision making, and quality control. Chapter 2 presents ways to prepare for curriculum alignment by focusing on trend analysis. Topics discussed include the curriculum-development cycle, schools as sorting mechanisms, and gap analysis. The third chapter discusses the concepts of frontloading and backloading, outlining the advantages and disadvantages of these strategies. The last chapter looks at the curriculum audit and explores ways to increase understanding of the audit and its assumptions. (RJM)

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Curriculum Alignment

A Facilitator's Guide to *Deciding What to Teach and Test*

Betty E. Steffy

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A Facilitator's Guide to *Deciding What to Teach and Test*

Betty E. Steffy

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Foreword

Curriculum Alignment: A Facilitator's Guide to Deciding What to Teach and Test, by Betty E. Steffy, a professor of educational administration at Iowa State University, is a bridge between two of my own works on the subject of curriculum alignment. The first is my best-selling book, *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, written for Corwin Press in 1992. Now in its ninth printing, it continues to be a strong seller nationally.

The second publication is *The Video Journal of Education*'s staff development tape on curriculum alignment (no. 151), which I recorded, and that was released nationally. The videotape has been widely viewed and used by educators.

Curriculum Alignment uses these two works to create learning and staff development activities that apply and extend my original ideas. This book will be a new platform for leading educators to engage in curriculum alignment to improve pupil achievement.

Betty Steffy has extensive and practical experience in teacher training, staff development, and educational reform. She has applied the ideas in her book directly by working with classroom teachers in several states. We both invite you to examine this book as a practical and powerful blend of the theory and practice behind curriculum alignment.

Fenwick W. English

Preface

The purpose of this workbook is to provide school administrators charged with the responsibility of facilitating the curriculum alignment process with a carefully structured process to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish the task. It is a practical "how-to" manual and takes into consideration the limited amount of time available to the busy administrator.

This workbook outlines specific steps a facilitator could take to translate the ideas presented in *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, published by Corwin Press, and Tape 1, *Achieving Curriculum Alignment*, in the two-tape video *Developing, Aligning, and Auditing Curriculum*, published by *The Video Journal of Education*, into practical curriculum alignment activities. These two resources are used to promote a greater understanding of curriculum alignment and provide visual and written explanations of the concepts involved.

Throughout the guide, the facilitator will be referred to specific page numbers in the book and specific footage on the videotape. When references are made to the videotape, a counter number will be given. Because equipment may differ, users are cautioned to check the counter numbers for alignment with the equipment being used.

The workbook is organized into a series of chapters, with selected activities that closely follow the chapters in the book. The manual is written with the assumption that the work can be completed during a 3- to 4-month period of time. Each set of activities is designed to build on the work accomplished in previous sessions. By following this process, a district administrator, working alone and with a variety of committees, should be able to put in place curriculum alignment procedures and activities to assure congruence among the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

About the Author

Betty E. Steffy is a Professor of Educational Administration in the College of Education at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Formerly, she occupied a unique dual position in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where she served as dean of the School of Education at Indian-Purdue Fort Wayne, and director of program evaluation of the Fort Wayne Community Schools.

She is perhaps best known for her work in Kentucky, where she served as deputy superintendent for instruction in the Kentucky Department of Education. She wrote the definitive text, *The Kentucky Education Reform: Lesson for America*, on the early thinking and implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

Steffy's administrative experience has included serving as superintendent of schools in Moorestown, New Jersey; assistant superintendent of schools in Lynbook, Long Island, New York; and director of curriculum for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

She has also served as a classroom teacher in Pennsylvania and as the director of Field Experiences in Teacher Education at the University of Pittsburgh. She is the author and coauthor of five books. In 1985, the *Executive Educator* magazine named her one of the 100 national educators to watch for future prominence. She has spoken to national audiences at AASA and ASCD on the Kentucky reform, and presented symposia papers at AERA on various aspects of educational reform. In the summer of 1993, she was invited by a South African national foundation to meet with leaders from the African National Congress at Princeton University regarding reform of that nation's schools, which serve 10 million children. She is currently collaborating on a project with Kappa Delta Phi on the life cycle of the classroom teacher. She earned her BS, MAT, and EdD at the University of Pittsburgh.

1

Understanding the Concept of Alignment

This "how-to" manual is designed to provide practical step-by-step activities that will enable a school administrator charged with the responsibility for curriculum alignment to design and implement a process to improve student achievement. These activities are incremental and will gradually lead the administrator through steps that will expand this leader's knowledge base, provide practice in engaging key teachers and administrators in reviewing the present status of curriculum alignment, and finally, engage in a process to analyze the curriculum management support structures operating in the district. Throughout this manual, we refer to this administrator as the facilitator.

Each chapter includes a series of activities generally designed for completion within a 45 minute to 1½ hour time period. All of the activities follow the same format. These include the following:

- Title
- Level
- Purpose
- Materials
- Estimated time
- Participants
- Discussion
- Steps

The *title* of the activity provides a general understanding of the focus of the activity. Depending on the facilitator's past experience and knowledge, the title should enable the facilitator to make a quick judgment about whether the activity is one that will promote further learning. In some cases the facilitator may decide to combine activities. All of these modifications are appropriate and encouraged. In preparing this manual,

the author developed these activities with the assumption that the user may be someone who has recently been promoted or newly hired to a curriculum management position.

All activities are designed to be at one or more of three *levels*. The levels are awareness, application, and analysis. Awareness activities are usually completed by the facilitator alone and are designed to expand the knowledge base of the facilitator. A few of the activities provide for awareness of a group of key teachers and administrators, but these activities usually include an additional component of application and/or analysis. Application activities are designed to review district materials and practices to determine the extent of the curriculum alignment implementation in the district. These have been designed for the facilitator and for committees. Activities identified as *analysis* include a component for determining the effectiveness of the activity in promoting curriculum alignment or designing new procedures to be implemented in the future. After completing all of the activities included in this manual, the facilitator will be in a position to effectively design, implement, evaluate, and lead the curriculum management system of the district.

The *purpose* of each activity is clearly stated. The *materials* needed to complete the activity are listed. The facilitator may decide to include additional relevant material. This is also appropriate and encouraged. The facilitator is in the best position to make a judgment about the materials to be reviewed. Those listed in the activity are meant to serve as a starting point.

Estimated time is just that, an estimation of the amount of time to complete the activity. Activities are designed for completion in short periods. It is very difficult to find more than 2 hours in a given day when a facilitator could expect to have personal growth and reflection time. It is equally difficult for facilitators to engage key teachers and administrators for long periods of time. Consequently, these activities have been broken into small segments. If the facilitator can provide longer periods of time to engage in these activities, they can easily be combined at the discretion of the facilitator.

Participants is another area where there is great flexibility on the part of the facilitator in making a judgment about who would benefit the most from engaging in an activity. The participants listed are simply suggested as a place to begin. It is important for the facilitator to have a complete understanding of the key concepts related to curriculum alignment and curriculum management before the facilitator involves others in this process. Even though many of the activities involve key teachers and administrators, this involvement is considered capacity building for the district. These activities generally engage the participants in an application of the alignment process so that when the formal curriculum alignment plan is implemented in the district, large numbers of key teachers and all of the district administrators have been involved in some aspect of this internal review.

The *discussion* section introduces the reader to the activity and provides additional background information.

Steps to be taken to complete each activity are clearly stated. If the step includes the use of the videotape, the specific place to begin and end is stated. Remember that the counter numbers on all equipment are not the same. It will be necessary for the facilitator to carefully review the videotape and adjust the counter numbers appropriately. To assist in this process, the author has included the last statement on the videotape to indicate when the videotape should be stopped. The steps also make reference to specific pages in the book that speak directly to the content covered in the activity. The facilitator is frequently asked to provide the participants who are completing an activity with an overview of the material in the book. The facilitator will have to make a determination about whether participants should have a personal copy of the book. Some districts have found it especially useful for each school principal to have at least one copy of the book available in the professional development library of the school. Others have made it available to key teachers, board members, parents, and community leaders involved in this capacity building series of activities. This is a local district decision.

Chapter 1 Activities

After completing the activities included in this chapter, a person charged with the responsibility of facilitating that curriculum alignment process would be able to meet the following objectives:

1. Have a comprehensive understanding of the content and format of the book *Deciding What to Teach and Test* and the videotape *Achieving Curriculum Alignment*.
2. Understand the operational definition of key concepts associated with the curriculum alignment process.
3. Relate key concepts to a reflective analysis of the status of curriculum alignment in the district.
4. Identify exemplary curriculum alignment practices currently in place in the district.

Activity 1.1 Becoming Familiar With the Videotape

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide the facilitator with an overview of the format and material covered in the videotape *Achieving Curriculum Alignment*.

Materials: *Achieving Curriculum Alignment*

Estimated time: Approximately 1½ hours

Participants: Initially, the facilitator should view the videotape alone. This activity can be repeated with appropriate stakeholder groups in the school community, for example, curriculum alignment committee, key administrators, and appropriate advisory groups. If the videotape is being used with stakeholder groups, the facilitator should select appropriate sections for viewing rather than showing the entire 40-minute videotape.

Discussion: Because the videotape and the book will serve as the primary resources for all of the activities, it is important for you to become familiar with these materials. The first activity provides an opportunity to understand the content and the format of the videotape. It is recommended that the videotape be viewed in three different sections. This is also a good time for you to check the counter numbers to see if they align with the equipment being used to view the videotape.

This first viewing will acquaint you with the format of the videotape. The content is delivered using three main techniques. First, the narrator provides an overview of key concepts. These are highlighted with the presentation of visual graphics. Second, Dr. English is shown explaining the material in a group workshop setting. Finally, the video shows examples of districts where the concepts and ideas have been implemented and provides testimony of those using the ideas about the benefits of the alignment process.

The preview of the videotape has been divided into three segments to correspond with three of the four chapters in this manual. The first segment deals with key concepts such as the written, taught, and tested curriculum; focus and connectivity; coordinated and articulated curriculum; site-based decision making; and quality control (Chapter 1 of this manual). The second segment deals with backloading and frontloading (Chapter 3 of this manual). The final segment deals with concluding comments about the value of the curriculum alignment process (Chapter 3). You are encouraged to use the entire video or appropriate sections related to the activities in Chapter 4.

Activity 1.1 begins by asking you to write a reflective statement about why these materials were purchased. This is intended to focus your atten-

tion on the expectations the district has for the curriculum alignment process. The process of reflective thought is integrated into many of the activities in this manual. It is through reflection that growth is supported. During these times it is common for new insights to emerge. Reflection enables you to view the system in a quasi-objective way. This, combined with the introduction of new ways of looking at curriculum design and delivery, enables you to develop a holistic understanding of the status of the system and begin to think about where connections are solid and where they are weak.

You are urged to record notes about the videotape itself, what you liked and what you did not like. While viewing the video, you will naturally begin to think of ideas about how the videotape could be used. This type of reflective thought is encouraged. You should feel free to stop the tape more frequently than suggested to engage in this activity. Additionally, you are encouraged to jot down the names of other administrators in the district that should view the videotape. This list should include those administrators who may not be convinced that curriculum alignment is an activity in which the district should engage. It should also include the names of administrators who have recently assumed positions as principals or assistant principals.

The last step in this activity is for you to begin to brainstorm a list of possible "next steps" that could be taken in the district to promote curriculum alignment. This list should be considered a beginning. There will be opportunities to add to the list and refine it as additional activities are completed.

Steps:

1. Take about 15 minutes to write a reflective statement about why these materials were purchased and the role you are expected to play in using them to promote curriculum alignment in the district.
2. View the videotape in three segments.

   Segment 1: 3:05 to 25:47

   This segment of the videotape provides an overview of key curriculum alignment concepts.

   As you watch each segment, make note of the key words.

   Segment 2: 25:48 to 36:56

   This segment describes the process of frontloading and backloading.

   Segment 3: 36:57 to 37:14

   This segment includes concluding comments about the value of the curriculum alignment process.
3. Make notes about your impressions of the videotape. What did you like about the tape? What are your initial ideas about how it could be used in your district? Are there other administrators/staff in the district who should view the tape?
4. Develop a list of "next steps" you think would be appropriate.

Activity 1.2 Becoming Familiar With *Deciding What to Teach and Test*

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide the facilitator with an understanding of how the book is organized, and enable the facilitator to become familiar with the major content areas covered.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*

Estimated time: Approximately 45 minutes

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Activity 1.2 continues your orientation to the materials included in this packet. This time you are focusing on the book *Deciding What to Teach and Test*. Although both the videotape and the book cover content related to curriculum alignment, they are organized in different ways.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter of the book covers the basic concepts dealt with in the first chapter of this manual and the first part of the videotape. One could say that there is good alignment between the first part of the videotape, the first chapter in the text, and the first chapter in this manual.

The second chapter provides in-depth information about issues related to constructing curriculum. Key concepts such as gap analysis and needs assessment are discussed. There is attention given to the use of instructional time for the delivery of a curriculum and the impact instructional time has on the constructions of new curriculum guides.

Chapter 3 in the book is closely related to Chapter 3 in this manual. It deals in some detail with the concept of frontloading and backloading and the advantages and disadvantages attached to both ways of constructing curriculum. The concept of a validation matrix is introduced, and there is a lengthy discussion about the merits of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests and their use. These concepts are also covered in the videotape.

The fourth chapter of the book is about the curriculum audit process. This manual does not reference the videotape about this process because Dr. English is under contract with Phi Delta Kappa to market this training. Curriculum audit training sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa is available periodically across the country. However, Chapter 4 of this manual is closely related to Chapter 4 of the book, and the activities are related to applying the standards of the curriculum audit to an internal review of the facilitator's district.

As you review the table of contents and scan the book, you will become aware of the fact that the book covers more material and in greater depth than the videotape. This is expected. For many of the activities, the videotape provides a broad overview of a concept and the material in the book expands and reinforces this material. You are asked to pay particular attention to the definitions for key terms and concepts, which appear on pages 17 through 20 of the book. At the back of the book, there is a section called "Troubleshooting Guide." This section is particularly useful for referencing sections of the book that deal with common curriculum alignment problems.

Again, you are asked to reflect about the knowledge level of administrators, particularly building principals, related to the content of the book. The attitudes and beliefs administrators hold about curriculum alignment directly influence how they communicate with building staff about this process. If there is wide variation in support for this concept or pockets of resistance among these administrators, it must be dealt with. It is useful to identify any current staff members who have attended curriculum alignment training sessions with Dr. English. These individuals can be of great assistance in gaining the support of administrators and staff for the process.

Continue to add to and revise the list of possible "next steps" you started as part of Activity 1. Add as much specificity to your list as you can based on what you know about past practice in the district.

Steps:

1. Review the table of contents. Note that the chapter titles are similar to the chapter titles in this book.
2. Review your notes from watching the videotape. Note that the videotape does not cover all of the material covered in the book. The greatest congruence between the videotape and the book is with Chapters 1 and 3. Chapter 2 of the book greatly expands on the topic of developing the written curriculum. The videotape does not cover the topic of the curriculum audit. This is because of the contractual relationship with Phi Delta Kappa to deliver curriculum audit training.
3. Briefly scan the book to gain familiarity with the content.
4. Note the section on pages 17 through 20 titled "Key Terms and Concepts."
5. Note the "Trouble-Shooting Guide" on pages 125 through 128.
6. Reflect the level of knowledge that staff and administrators in the district have regarding the material covered in the book.
7. Determine who in the district has attended curriculum alignment sessions presented by Dr. English.
8. Revisit and revise your list of "next steps" developed as part of Activity 1.

Activity 1.3 Written, Taught, and Tested Curriculum

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to introduce participants to the operational definitions of these terms as used by Dr. English in the curriculum alignment process.

Materials: Videotape: 3:05 to 7:06

Deciding What to Teach and Test, Chapter 1, "The Function of Curriculum in Schools," pages 1 through 21

Sample of written curriculum guides in mathematics and/or language arts

State curriculum frameworks or other state curriculum documents in mathematics and language arts

Scope and sequence charts in mathematics and language arts

Selections of teacher's manuals for textbooks in mathematics and/or language arts

State testing information about required tests in mathematics and/or language arts

Mandated district testing information about tests in mathematics and/or language arts

Estimated time: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Activity 1.3 enables you to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship in your district among the written and tested curriculum. The two content areas most often assessed on state-level tests are the basis for this review. These areas are mathematics and language arts. You may decide that you want to focus this review on only one of these content areas for a variety of reasons. You should feel comfortable doing this.

This activity begins by refocusing your attention to the operational definition of the three words: *written*, *taught*, and *tested* curriculum. This is accomplished by viewing a segment of the videotape and carefully reading the first chapter of the book. The *written* curriculum is defined as any written document teachers refer to as they plan instruction. Include these documents in your review, but pay special attention to the district's official, board-approved written curriculum guides. As you review the curriculum guides, make notes about how they are organized, the format(s) used, and the years they were developed. What grade levels are covered? Are critical components missing? Estimate how useful teachers find these documents.

If your state has produced a curriculum framework in these areas, review those documents next. Look for similarities and differences between the state curriculum framework and the local district guides. Note when the curriculum framework was developed. How does that correspond with the date(s) for the development of the curriculum guides?

Next, review teacher's manuals and scope and sequence charts. Continue to look for the similarities and differences among these written documents. There is a great body of research that indicates that teachers rely most heavily on the textbook as a guide for instructional planning. Pay particular attention to whether there is congruence between the textbook and the state curriculum framework. Note the specificity of the standards listed in the state framework. Are they specific enough to guide instructional planning? Many state frameworks and scope and sequence charts state standards in global terms and are not helpful in discriminating among specific skills and concepts to be taught. Note whether the standards are content-based or generic in nature (this could apply to many content areas). Most state frameworks and scope and sequence charts are generic.

Review the materials you have assembled that relate to the state testing program and to district tests that are mandated for all students in these content areas. Make a note of the time of year these tests are given and the grade levels tested. Make additional notes about the grade levels that are not involved in this assessment. Review the type of tests, noting whether they are basically traditional norm-referenced tests or criterion-referenced tests. Does the state require assessment of a student's ability to write? Note the dimensions of the scoring rubric. Are these dimensions covered in the district curriculum guide? Have teachers been trained in the use of the state-scoring rubric? Are students aware of the scoring rubric, and do they routinely use the rubric to self-assess their own work and assess the work of peers? How are new teachers hired in the district oriented to the state and district testing program? When do these teachers receive professional development regarding this system? If you are not sure about how scoring rubrics are used, find out.

Finally, write a reflective paragraph about what you have learned by this review. You are attempting to describe the level of consistency among the written, taught, and tested curriculum in the district in the areas of mathematics and language arts. Note the strengths and weaknesses of the present system from your vantage point. This activity is designed to increase your knowledge and sensitivity to the degree of alignment in the system so that you can plan the most appropriate activities to enhance that congruence. The future activities you plan should enable staff to take small incremental steps toward alignment. Those participating should see the relationship between the planning that has gone on in the district in the past and how to improve student achievement with additional planning and implementation. Care must be taken to assure that the staff does not view future activities as ones designed to replace everything that

has been accomplished to this point. They should view future steps as ones based on informed, value-added procedures that will make their work easier, not add another layer of paperwork.

Steps:

1. Read Chapter 1 in the book.
2. Play the videotape: 3:05 to 4:46, ending with the statement "Nobody ever stole a curriculum guide."
3. Review the sample of curriculum guides and note the format used. Look for similarities and differences among the guides and note these.
4. Review the state curriculum framework or other state documents describing curriculum requirements.
5. Note the similarities and differences among the district curriculum guides and the state frameworks.
6. Play the videotape: 4:46 to 5:33, ending with the statement "I can schedule Algebra I to be taught period one, but I can't schedule Algebra I to be learned period one."
7. Review the teacher's manuals.
8. Review scope and sequence charts.
9. Note the similarities and differences between what is covered in the textbooks and what is covered in the state frameworks.
10. Play the videotape: 5:33 to 7:06, ending with the statement "Kids do better on tests if you teach them what you test them on, than if you don't."
11. Review state and district materials about mandated tests in the areas of mathematics and language arts.
12. Identify the specific grade levels where tests are administered.
13. Describe the type of tests given (traditional or authentic).
14. Become familiar with the skills assessed at the various grade levels.
15. Describe the level of consistency among the written, taught, and tested curriculum.
16. Write a reflective paragraph describing the status of the written, taught, and tested curriculum in mathematics and/or language arts for your school system.

Activity 1.4 Focus and Connectivity

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to enable participants to understand the operational definition of *instruction* as it relates to the concept of focus and connectivity.

Materials: Videotape: 7:06 to 9:45

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Participants: Facilitator

Curriculum alignment committee

Discussion: Activity 1.4 provides you with an opportunity to reflect about the degree of focus and connectivity that exists in the district and the support within the system for the concept. Focus and connectivity deals with the issue of deciding what is most important to teach (focus) and then marshaling the valuable resources of the system toward making sure that they are used, systemwide (connectivity), to achieve those objectives.

Time, materials, and people are the three most important resources found in every school system. Of these three, time may be the most important. The amount of instructional time available within a given school year has remained relatively constant for more than 50 years. At the same time, schools have continued to add to the content being delivered within that instructional time. Most state testing programs do not assess all content areas. Most focus on mathematics and language arts, although there is a trend to add assessments in the areas of science, social studies, and sometimes the arts. How has your district aligned the use of instructional time with the state assessment program at each level within the system: elementary, middle school, and high school? Or has the system continued to maintain a schedule at these levels that is based on traditional class periods? How has the movement toward block scheduling and integrated curriculum assisted with focus and connectivity within the system for the areas tested by the state? Are these topics that have been discussed?

Materials acquisition usually relates to the selection of new textbooks or supplementary materials. How do district practices in these areas promote focus and connectivity within the system? Are elementary teachers involved in the selection of materials at the middle school level? Are high school teachers aware of the content of materials selected at the elementary level? How are these practices related to deciding what to focus on and what to connect within the system?

How are staff and administrators involved in determining the focus of the system? Do all teachers, in all content areas, understand what the specific academic focus of the system is? How is information about this focus shared with staff? What data are shared with the staff and administration to assist in making the instructional modifications necessary to be sure those things the district has determined to be "most important to teach and test" are being taught effectively? What are the formative and summative evaluation procedures providing these data?

Being able to identify both the forces promoting focus and connectivity, and the forces that act as barriers, is an important part of your role. In planning future activities you will want to expand the positive forces promoting focus and connectivity and diminish those forces that act as barriers. The attitudes of the staff and administration about the value of focus and connectivity are key components to the design of these activities. If a vast majority of teachers believe they have a responsibility to decide what is important for students to know and be able to do, independent of other teachers in the system, the district curriculum, or the state testing program, then your role will be different from a system where the vast majority of teachers understand the concept of accountability and agree that it is important to coordinate the work of the system to accomplish common goals.

Steps:

1. Play the videotape: 7:06 to 9:45, ending with the statement ". . . we can still do those things as long as we have specific objectives in mind."
2. Write out the definition of *instruction* provided by Dr. English.
3. What does the phrase "focus and connectivity" mean?
4. Estimate the degree of focus and connectivity that exists at each level within your school system (elementary, middle, and high school) in the areas of mathematics and language arts.
5. Identify the barriers to establishing focus and connectivity within the school system.
6. Identify those forces that are supporting the expansion of more focus and connectivity within the system.
7. Reflect about the degree of support among the administrative staff for promoting more focus and connectivity.
8. Reflect about the degree of support among the teaching staff for promoting more focus and connectivity.
9. In your opinion, where is the greatest need for more focus and connectivity in the district?

Activity 1.5 Coordination/Articulation

Level: Awareness
Application
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to assess the degree of articulation and coordination that exists in the district in the areas of mathematics and language arts, and to analyze district practices that support these activities.

Materials: Videotape: 9:45 to 17:38
Deciding What to Teach and Test, pp. 3-7
Inservice schedule for the district for the past 2 years and the current year
Agenda for grade-level meetings
Agenda for K-12 meetings

Estimated time: 1 hour

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Before designing curriculum alignment activities for the system, it is important for you to become knowledgeable about the degree of articulation and coordination that presently exists in the system. The amount of time needed to complete this activity will be dependent on your knowledge of the system, its size, and the level of curriculum alignment that presently exists. All of these factors will affect how you may wish to modify and adjust the suggested steps. Do not spend more than 2 hours working on this activity at any one sitting. If more time is needed, it will help if you plan periodic breaks so that you can reflect and synthesize what you are learning.

You may find that good articulation and coordination exists within one school and not another. Or, you may find that it exists at the elementary level and not the secondary level. It may also exist in one content area and not another. All of these variables will impact the completion of this activity. It is important to spend whatever time is necessary to complete all the steps. Remember that you are laying the foundation for how you will design new curriculum alignment activities for the system.

District practices related to curriculum alignment fall into two categories: design practices and delivery practices. *Design* refers to the practices related to the development of written documents, and *delivery* refers to how the practices that are designed are implemented. A district can have a good design for carrying out a function but not implement or deliver it. It is also possible, especially in small districts, to have common practices

informally implemented uniformly even though they are not written down. It is recommended that curriculum alignment practices be both designed and delivered.

When you analyze the degree of curriculum coordination at the various grade levels, you may want to conduct this analysis building by building because the degree of coordination within a school is often largely dependent on how the principal of the school uses the common planning time for teachers in the building. First look for coordination across grade levels within each building, and then look for coordination across buildings. Coordination across buildings requires that there are opportunities for teachers working in all buildings at the elementary level to have opportunities to meet periodically and discuss curriculum coordination issues. These opportunities can be traced by reviewing the agendas of districtwide professional development meetings. It is not unusual to find systems where this activity never takes place. After you complete your analysis, reflect on what you have learned and write a summary of the degree of coordination that takes place in the system in the areas of mathematics and language arts. Make this analysis as specific as possible. You may find that professional development activities should be planned for building administrators who are not providing opportunities for teachers to meet and talk across grade levels within a building or across buildings.

Articulation problems are even more common than coordination problems. *Articulation* refers to the degree to which teachers at one grade level are designing instruction to be compatible with instruction at previous grade levels and future grade levels. Often, the skills tested at one grade level are introduced, reinforced, and mastered through instruction provided at numerous grade levels. Teachers need to know how the instruction they are planning integrates with the total program. After examining articulation activities within each building, examine how articulation occurs from one level to another. It is rare to find a system where high school teachers and middle school teachers meet with elementary teachers often enough to have an understanding of the K-12 program in a content area; however, this is necessary for strong, effective curriculum alignment. The role of the building principal is critical for implementing effective curriculum articulation activities.

When you have completed your analysis, you will be in a position to begin to plan activities to improve the degree of articulation and coordination in your school district. Your planning must include consideration of the amount of time that will be required to carry out these activities. You may wish to design the activities as a series of inservice sessions for building principals and then charge them with the responsibility to see that they are carried out. These activities will undoubtedly have budget implications, and these must be provided for. This may require that funds to support these activities be identified in the current budget or that the activities be delayed until adequate funding can be found. It is also impor-

tant to give careful consideration to who will conduct the inservice sessions. You may decide that you want to assume that responsibility. If you decide to conduct these sessions yourself (and we do recommend this), be sure you have the written and verbal support of the superintendent and the board for what you are attempting to accomplish. Principals are busy people, and they do not always freely participate in districtwide meetings without grumbling about it. The most common objection is often that they need to be in their buildings to handle day-to-day management issues rather than "wasting their time" out of the building. With proper communication with the board, community, and staff, these types of objections can be minimized.

Steps:

1. Reread pages 3 through 7 in the book.
2. Differentiate between design problems and delivery problems, and be sure you understand the difference.
3. Define *curriculum coordination*.
4. Play the videotape: 9:45 to 10:25, ending with the statement ". . . that's where you need to put your resources."
5. Describe the degree of curriculum coordination that exists at each grade level within the system.
6. Describe the degree of curriculum coordination that exists among elementary schools within the system.
7. Identify the barriers to curriculum coordination across elementary buildings.
8. Define *curriculum articulation*.
9. Play the videotape: 10:25 to 13:14, ending with the statement ". . . we feel that cross-grade communication is very important."
10. Describe the degree of articulation that exists within buildings in the district.
11. Describe the role of the building principal in promoting curriculum articulation and coordination.
12. Identify the amount of time available for faculty to meet with the purpose of curriculum coordination and articulation.
13. Play the videotape: 13:14 to 17:38, ending with the statement ". . . it's the superintendent's responsibility to create a school system."
14. Describe the degree of articulation among the elementary, middle, and high schools in the areas of mathematics and language arts.
15. How often do K-12 mathematics and language arts teachers meet to discuss curriculum?
16. How much do high school and middle school teachers know about the mathematics and language arts curriculum at the elementary level?

17. Describe why the high school is the school most at risk of school failure.
18. Identify a series of steps that can be taken to increase the amount of coordination and articulation within the school district.
19. What resources will be necessary to implement these steps?
20. Develop a timeline for the implementation of these steps.

Activity 1.6 Site-Based Decision Making

Level Awareness
Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to review district policies regarding site-based decision making to see if these policies support or impede district-level curriculum alignment.

Materials: Videotape: 17:38 to 18:42
District policies and/or administrative regulations regarding site-based decision making
Any relevant state statutes or regulations
District site-based decision-making manuals

Estimated time: 1 hour

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Within the past few years, there has been a movement toward encouraging building-level staff to make decisions about areas that impact what happens within a school. The phrase *site-based decision making* refers to this type of decision making. In some states, the existence of a site-based council is required by state statute or state regulation. Some of these statutes are so specific that they dictate the size and role composition of the council. In other states, these decisions are left to the discretion of the local board.

How a site council functions can dramatically impact district curriculum alignment effectiveness. It is important that you understand the impact that site councils have in your district. Does the site council have the authority to make final decisions about the purchase of instructional materials? Does this lead to the selection of different textbooks for use in different buildings in the same content area? Do site councils have the authority to set school schedules for the use of instructional time within a building? How is the council involved in the selection of new staff or a new principal? Does the council include representation from parents? How is the activity of site councils communicated and coordinated across the district? Is there a board policy guiding site council activity? Does each site council have bylaws that govern how they function? The answers to these questions can help you determine the impact these groups have on curriculum alignment.

However they are organized, site council members can be used to support increased alignment activities. They are important stakeholders in

the system and should not be overlooked as an important resource. Depending on the responses to the questions raised here, you may want to suggest the creation or revision of board policy to ensure that these councils function in a supportive way.

Steps:

1. Assemble and read all relevant policies, regulations, statutes, and manuals.
2. Play the videotape: 17:38 to 18:42, ending with the statement "You have to know what to decentralize and what not to decentralize in order to optimize pupil achievement."
3. Make a list of functions related to curriculum development and management that have been decentralized to the building level.
4. Make a list of functions related to curriculum development and management that have not been decentralized to the building level.
5. Identify any decentralized functions that could interfere with curriculum alignment (e.g., each school selecting their own textbook).
6. Identify site-based decision-making responsibilities that could be expanded to support the curriculum alignment process.
7. Write a summary of your findings and recommendations and present it to the administrative team for discussion.

Activity 1.7 Quality Control

Level: Application
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to analyze the degree of curriculum quality control that presently exists in the district and develop a plan for increasing quality control at the district level in the areas of mathematics and language arts.

Materials: Notes from Activity 1.3
Deciding What to Teach and Test, Chapter 1
Videotape: 18:42 to 23:18
District materials used in Activity 1.3

Estimated time: This is dependent on the size of the district, the level of state activity in designing curriculum frameworks, and the status of the state assessment system.

Participants: Facilitator assisted by key administrative and teaching staff

Discussion: With this activity, you begin to expand the level of active participation in the analysis of current district practice regarding curriculum alignment. Through Activities 1.1 through 1.6, you have become familiar with the content of Chapter 1 and the first section of the videotape. You have reviewed district and state documents related to quality control and have reflected about district practice.

Now it is time to expand the circle of those directly involved in this process. In putting together the committee, you will want to choose the most influential stakeholders representing the teachers and administrative staff. These people should be respected by their constituencies and known to be thoughtful and fair, and to have a good understanding of the system. This committee will play a key role in the development of the district plan to strengthen curriculum alignment in the district. It will be important to have committee members who care about the system, who understand its strengths and weaknesses, and who are not afraid to voice their concerns. You will be relying on this committee to be the political force to assist you in developing district, community, and board acceptance of the changes in instructional practice that will be necessary.

The committee should be composed of representation from the elementary, middle, and high schools. It should include both content area teachers and those responsible for special areas such as special education, technology, and Title I. Even though the committee will be analyzing

the content areas of mathematics and language arts, it is important to have representation from the other content areas. There should be at least one teacher with expertise in each of the content areas. Later, these individuals can serve as communicators with their content area colleagues. You will have to make a determination about how you wish to use this committee in the future. For now, their main function is to conduct a formal analysis of the degree of quality control that exists in the district.

It is very important that the first meeting of the committee be tightly organized. Each participant should quickly understand that you have spent a great deal of time preparing for this event. All appropriate materials should be available for review. If you decide to hold a series of meetings to complete the work, these should be scheduled so participants clearly see the time commitment they are making to this task.

The work should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Participants should understand what products their work will generate and how these products can be used in the district.

As suggested in the steps, you may want to divide the group into three subgroups, with each group focusing on one level within the system. If you decide to organize the work in this way, be sure to provide sufficient time for the groups to talk and share their findings. Participants in this process should gain a thorough understanding of the status of the written, taught, and tested curriculum in mathematics and language arts. They should be able to articulate where there is congruency among the three and where there are deficiencies.

With the analysis complete, the committee should be restructured to develop a tentative plan, which will be shared with the administrative team. Many of the activities in this workbook require information to be shared with an administrative team. The superintendent defines administrative team membership. It is that group of professionals the superintendent uses as the advisory group for district policy development and decision making. In most districts, the administrative team is composed of key central office staff such as the assistant superintendent(s), the chief financial officer, the director(s) of pupil personnel, student services, and transportation. On rare occasions, the superintendent makes these decisions and does not use an administrative team. If this is the case in your district, perhaps the superintendent may wish to form an administrative team to perform this function.

After the committee has finalized a tentative plan, it should be shared with the administrative team. You may wish to include members of the committee in this presentation. This is up to you, although it is highly recommended. The plan should be sent to the administrative team prior to the formal meeting where it will be discussed, with instructions for the team to come to the meeting with specific suggestions for improvement of the plan. The meeting with the administrative team should be a working meeting. The idea is to leave that meeting with recommendations for revisions that can be taken back to the working committee for discussion.

The same process should be used with building principals, only this time principals should be given time to explain the plan to staff and ask for their suggestions for improvement. You may want to suggest that a member of the working committee be present at each of the meetings held by the building principals to act as a facilitator and to clarify the work of the committee. By having a committee member present, you also avoid the possibility that inaccurate information is shared with staff.

When all of the suggestions for revisions have been considered and the plan is finalized, it should be presented to the board. This can be an informational item. You are not asking for board approval as much as informing the board of proposed curriculum alignment work in the system. How the plan is presented to the board is a decision the superintendent should make.

The final communication step is to share the plan with outside stakeholders. If the district is large, you may want to consider developing materials to provide an overview of the plan. These can include an agenda for the meeting, a suggested script, all handouts, and presentation materials. This will ensure consistency across the community in what information is shared and how it is provided.

Following this format should result in the entire community becoming aware of the work that is planned. If done well, it will generate strong support for the process.

Steps:

1. Examine all relevant documents as a committee of the whole.
2. Play the videotape: 18:42 to 23:18, ending with the statement "We need to know the answers to all of these things before we can focus our district."
3. Have all members of the committee read Chapter 1 in *Deciding What to Teach and Test*.
4. If the committee is large, it can be subdivided into three groups. Each group could focus on one level within the system—elementary, middle, or high school—or the committee could be divided into two groups and each group could look at one content area. You may decide that it is too difficult to analyze both mathematics and language arts and determine that it would be best to begin with one content area. All of these decisions are feasible. There is no one way to begin. In addition, it is up to you to decide where to begin this analysis. It could begin with an analysis of the written curriculum. It could also begin with an analysis of the taught or tested curriculum. It is really up to you. The important thing to remember is that the outcome of this activity is to clearly understand the degree of quality control that presently exists in the district.
5. As a committee, discuss the finding of each of the groups. Determine the extent to which teachers are operating as random variables or purposive variables.

6. Given the context in which the district exists, develop a tentative plan for how the district should proceed with the curriculum alignment process.
7. As the facilitator of the group, share the materials and ideas that you have developed as you completed Activities 1.1 through 1.6.
8. Present the tentative plan to the administrative team for reaction, revision, and approval.
9. Present the revised tentative plan to all building administrators for review. Have principals solicit input from building staff and bring recommendations back to the committee.
10. Prepare a final plan. This plan should extend over a multiyear time frame. The specific time parameters should be determined at the local level.
11. Present the plan to the board for formal approval.
12. Revise the plan based on internal feedback.
13. Share the plan with outside stakeholder groups to gain their understanding and support in this important project.

Activity 1.8 Curriculum Alignment Specialists

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to identify teachers within the district who are currently employing curriculum alignment strategies in their classrooms.

Materials: Videotape: 23:21 to 25:45

Estimated time: Over a 2-week period of time

Participants: Building administrators
Facilitator
Curriculum alignment committee

Discussion: Teachers who are currently implementing curriculum alignment practices that ensure that the written, taught, and tested curriculum are congruent are employed in every district. These are usually the teachers whose students consistently score well on state tests year after year. These teachers have taken it on themselves to become aware of the content and context of the formal district and state assessment system, and who incorporate this information into their instructional planning. These teachers can be valuable resources to you as you implement the curriculum alignment plan.

Although you may be aware of who some of these teacher are, it is important to engage a broader group in their identification. This work could be incorporated into the committee that worked on the development of the district plan or building principals, or both.

The teachers identified by this process become a central group of educators that exhibit "best practice" in achieving quality control. By engaging them in a discussion about their practices, others can learn useful techniques. These teachers can also be instrumental in designing a process to enable the district to produce a compendium of exemplary curriculum alignment practices. Once started, this bank of examples of "best practice" can be a useful professional development tool within the system.

Steps:

1. Working with the curriculum alignment committee and building-level administrators, explain the objective of identifying current staff who are implementing specific curriculum alignment strategies.
2. Play the videotape: 23:21 to 25:45, ending with the statement ". . . that's a no-no, you don't surprise the kids."

3. Ask the group(s) to assist in the development of a process to identify teachers implementing curriculum alignment practices.
4. Building administrators may wish to nominate teachers. If so, there should be some type of nomination form developed.
5. Develop a process to identify "best practices" of curriculum alignment.
6. Invite these teachers to a special meeting to discuss what they do and why.
7. Engage these teachers in discussing how their work can be captured and shared with other teachers in the district. This could be done at an inservice session; these teachers could be videotaped discussing their ideas in structured focus groups, or videotaped classroom vignettes could be prepared and placed in a professional development library in the district. The objective is to identify teachers employing these strategies and find ways of sharing their knowledge and expertise throughout the district.

Summary

At this point, you should have a thorough understanding of the basic concepts related to curriculum alignment and quality control. You should also have a fair understanding of the extent to which these areas are incorporated into system operations. In addition, you should have spent a considerable amount of time reflecting about the synthesis of the ideas presented in the materials and the context within which you are working. In the next chapter, you will have an opportunity to continue these reflections and broaden your knowledge about the belief systems held by administrators and teachers, as well as expand your knowledge of major trends that will impact curriculum design activities in the future.

2

Preparing for Curriculum Alignment: *Trend Analysis*

Plans for implementing curriculum alignment activities differ district to district. No two districts go about the process in exactly the same way, although each is guided by the same basic concepts. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the context in which these activities will take place in order to design the most effective process.

The core curriculum in a school district should be designed to meet the unique needs of the students served by the system. As the needs of the students change, the curriculum also should change. Too often, little consideration is given to changing internal and external trends in a district when curriculum is being developed. If the district is experiencing the influx of a large group of immigrants from Bosnia, this will have implications for staffing, public relations, community support groups, facilities, transportation, instructional materials, and class size, as well the curriculum for every content area, especially language arts, social studies, and mathematics. Knowing whether there will be a continuing influx of new students from Bosnia, or whether this is a short-term issue, will also have an impact on curriculum alignment planning. If the district is expecting the influx to take place for a 3- to 5-year period and then diminish, the curriculum and staffing accommodations will be different from a situation where the district expects this trend to continue for the next 5 to 10 years. It will be important to get as much information about the skill level and age of the students that the district expects to receive. Working closely with outside agencies can assist the district in anticipating the needs of the incoming students.

A different set of curriculum implications will result from anticipated changes in the population and workforce of the community. If a large foreign automobile manufacturer has been approved to build a plant in the community that will eventually employ 6,000 workers, and the plant will

be built in a community of 10,000 residents, there will be serious implications for all aspects of the operation of the schools.

These two examples are extreme. The internal and external changes affecting most communities are much more subtle and take place gradually. Yet, the long-term impact on the school system can be just as dramatic. It is important for you to understand the current dynamics of the system and also have a clear understanding of expected changes.

It is unusual for a school administrator in charge of the development and implementation of curriculum to be directly involved in gathering information relative to these changes. This is a task frequently assumed by the business manager for director of facilities. These individuals assimilate the trends into plans for new construction and renovation of existing facilities. Modifications are made in the acquisition of needed transportation equipment. It is our strong belief that the most important planning that is necessary to deal with these changes is in the area of curriculum. The system must be prepared to position itself so that the staff is prepared to deliver what the students need, not wait until state test scores document deficiencies.

Making changes in the design, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum takes at least 2 years. Ascertaining the impact on classroom practice can take several more years unless procedures have been put into place during the curriculum planning process to address all aspects of quality control.

The typical curriculum development process does not promote congruence among the written, taught, and tested curriculum. These processes usually operate as separate functions and do not take into consideration both the internal and external forces impacting on the system even when this information is available with sufficient lead time to make the necessary modifications. The activities in this chapter will enable you to conduct a careful, reflective analysis of these trends, build solid communication networks with community and system staff who can keep you informed, and engage key teachers and administrators in thoughtful dialogue about classroom implications of the anticipated events.

Chapter 2 Activities

The activities in this chapter have been designed to enable you to gain this understanding. After completing these activities, you will be able to do the following:

1. Explain the internal and external trends that are currently impacting the design of curriculum in the district and explain the future internal and external trends that will be impacting the district.

2. Understand how the current system acts as a sorting mechanism for students based on the socioeconomic status of the students' families.
3. Explain the philosophies and beliefs of the majority of the system's educators and understand how these beliefs impact instructional planning.
4. Specify a format to be used for the development of future curriculum guides.

Activity 2.1 Trend Analysis

Level: Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to identify trends and patterns within the school district and the larger community that will affect the development of curriculum.

Materials: District planning documents (e.g., strategic plan, school improvement plans, accreditation reports, state monitoring reports, district personnel reports, budget reports)

Community planning documents, business reports, chamber of commerce report, economic development reports, and so forth

Any other district or community documents that will assist the facilitator in identifying trends

Estimated Time: 3 hours

Participants: Facilitator

District and community personnel deemed as useful resources

Discussion: Conducting both an internal and external analysis of the trends impacting the school system should be a continuing function of your role in curriculum alignment. It is essential that you have the best, most current, and complete set of materials to review. Initially assembling these materials will provide you with an opportunity to establish formal communication ties with many community agencies. If these ties already exist between the school system and the agencies, ask the person representing the district to assist you in becoming knowledgeable about the significant plans and stakeholders shaping the future direction of the community.

Today, it is most unusual for any business or agency to exist without some type of formal written statements about the future. These are often included in annual reports for major incorporated businesses operating in the community, as well as agencies providing formal support services. The volume of material that is available to you may surprise you. This can include projected real estate developments, both industrial and for private residence; birth rates by gender and ethnicity; changing demographics by population, age, and earnings; as well as the usual strategic plans available from government agencies serving the community.

It may also surprise you to learn about the age, certification, and potential retirement date of the present teaching staff in the district. The district needs to plan to hire new teachers with the skills to deliver that future curriculum. If the district determines that there will be a future demand

for graduates who are prepared for higher education, and the colleges and universities in the state are increasing entrance requirements, new hires must be equipped to deliver the curriculum. It is not unusual today to find newly certified teacher graduates who do not have the skills necessary to meet the diverse needs of the students they encounter in classrooms. Someone like yourself, with a thorough understanding of the needs and future direction for the schools, must be communicating with the postsecondary institutions in your community. This is another area of collaboration that is often overlooked in the curriculum development process.

After assembling all of the necessary documents and engaging in conversations with key stakeholders in the community, you will be in a position to identify key trends that will have implications for curriculum 2 or 3 years into the future. This information will be essential for curriculum development committees to consider when they deal with questions related to deciding what to teach and test.

Another positive outcome from this activity is determining the accessibility of the information needed. Many districts determine that although the information is there, it is not available in a user-friendly format. Another difficulty frequently encountered is the accuracy of the information available. As you complete this activity, you may decide that new procedures have to be designed to provide the information in a timely, accurate manner. Although you may not have originally considered this function as part of the curriculum alignment process, as you work through these activities the importance of this information becomes clear.

Steps:

1. Assemble and read all documents. Pay close attention to longitudinal trend data. As you are reviewing these documents, make notes of trends that will have an impact on the school community.
2. Externally, look for political and economic trends that might influence the economic base of the community. Will there be a change in job opportunities in the area? Are new industries moving into the area? Are plants closing and moving away? What type of workers will be needed in the community within the next 5 to 10 years?
3. Internally, look closely at the nature of the student population being served by the schools. Is the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch increasing or decreasing? What is the ethnic composition of the community and the school? Are certain ethnic groups increasing or decreasing? What is the percentage of students attending post-secondary education? What is the dropout rate in the district?
4. Review data relative to district employees. What is the average age of the faculty? When did they receive their degrees, undergraduate and master's? What is the percentage of teachers retiring each year? Collect similar data for building principals and central office staff.

5. Write a summary report of the internal and external trends and patterns that will impact the district within the next few years and present this information to the administrative team.
6. Discuss with the team the implications of these data for the curriculum development process within the district.

Activity 2.2 Curriculum Development Cycle

Level: Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to describe the curriculum development cycle that is currently in place in the district.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test,* pp. 22-25

Relevant board policies and administrative regulations

Curriculum planning documents

Reports filed by the office with responsibility for the management of curriculum development activities in the district

Estimated time: Approximately 1½ hours

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Curriculum development activities have been going on in districts since schools began. Almost every teacher who has wanted the experience has been able to work on one of these committees. The work usually takes place during the summer, involves a small, select group of teachers, and the document that is produced is handed out to staff at the beginning of the next school year after a short orientation. The project is then considered finalized, and attention shifts to another curriculum development project.

There are many stories told about curriculum guides. Most of them are not very flattering. Frankly, teachers do not find them particularly useful as guides to instructional planning. Activity 2.2 is designed to enable you to look carefully at the curriculum development practices that have been used in the district and reflect about changes that need to take place. This analysis should include a review of how decisions are made about what is not included in the curriculum as well as how decisions are made about what is to be included.

A good place to begin is to collect all board policies that speak to the curriculum development process. Because board policies are usually stated in global, general terms, you may have to examine a variety of them to see if there are any policies providing direction for the curriculum development process. Take special notice of when the policies were developed and when they have been reviewed and modified. If the district has administrative regulations providing more specificity regarding the curriculum development process, these should be reviewed as well. Codifying procedures in board policy and regulations has the advantage of providing consistency regardless of who is in a particular role. Unfortunately, many districts have not taken advantage of this technique to provide continuity in the system.

Next, attempt to determine the process used for the development of the last written curriculum guide. You may find it necessary to talk with teachers who served on the actual committee since this work takes place over time and usually there are no written agendas that are kept to record how the process evolved. Pay particular attention to who was on the committee. Was there representation from all buildings? Did administrators serve on the committee? Were other content areas and special support areas represented? When did the committee meet? How long did the project take? What format was used? How was this format chosen? Was the curriculum development process connected to a textbook adoption cycle? Was the textbook chosen first and then the curriculum developed, or was the curriculum developed and then a textbook selected?

After you have reviewed all available material and have talked with those who served on the committee, reflect about the process and write the suggested summary. Were you able to determine how decisions were made about what to include in the curriculum guide and what not to include? Would you describe the process as a traditional one? To what extent did the process support the development of quality control for the content area? Your summary should provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the process and your suggestions for improvement.

Steps:

1. Review all documents and read pages 22 through 25. Stop with Section B on page 25.
2. Does your district have a formal curriculum development process that is outlined in board policy and detailed in written administrative regulations? If so, describe the process in summary form.
3. If such a process does not exist, what is the informal mechanism used in the district to develop curriculum? Describe that process.
4. Describe the steps taken to develop the last curriculum guide (work plan, alignment document, or whatever terminology the district uses to label formal written curriculum documents given to teachers to aid them in planning instruction).
5. Who designed the process?
6. How was the guide distributed to teachers? How is the implementation of the guide being monitored? What feedback is being solicited from teachers about the effectiveness of the guide? Is there a formal process to enable teachers to provide feedback about the guide?
7. Is there an established cycle for the revision of curriculum guides? What is it?
8. What outside resources are used in the development of curriculum guides?
9. Prepare a summary document describing what you learned from your review. Make notes about possible areas for change in the future.

Activity 2.3 Schools as Sorting Mechanisms

Level: Application
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine how the present structure of the school system serves to support the notion that schools are sorting mechanisms.

Materials: Internal district documents that would enable the facilitator to construct charts detailing the percentage of students by socioeconomic class, gender, and ethnicity that fall into these various categories.

Estimated Time: Depends on availability of data and size of district

Participants: Facilitator
Testing coordinator
Director of pupil services
Other relevant district personnel

Discussion: Traditional instructional practices employed in the vast majority of school systems have been quite successful in sorting students by socioeconomic status. It is rare for a district to look at this issue. Although we have historically taken a position that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in school, the reality is that school success often parallels the socioeconomic status of families.

Initially, you may have difficulty finding the information you need to complete this analysis, but with some persistence and creative analysis, the picture can be candidly presented. First, determine what information is available and the format of that information. All districts maintain records of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch as well as those enrolled in specific classes such as advanced placement, higher levels of mathematics, or foreign language. Typically, these records are not in an interactive database, but this can be created. Also, it is not unusual for students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch not to take advantage of this program, particularly at the high school level. If students have been enrolled in the school system for a number of years, these data may still be available if students applied for the program at an earlier age. Student mobility factors also complicate this analysis. However, do persevere. Some districts can get close to socioeconomic data by using street addresses, zip codes, regional geographic boundaries, and parental self-disclosure. Remember that you are looking for trends in this analysis. You are attempting to answer the question "To what extend does student achievement relate to socioeconomic status in the district?" A basic

premise of curriculum alignment is that if the curriculum of the district is aligned, socioeconomic status is diminished as a predictive variable for student achievement.

The analysis of student grade point averages by gender and ethnicity and the number of As and Fs received by gender and ethnicity is a particularly revealing analysis. It is not unusual to find that African American males register the highest percentage of low achievement, and White females the highest percentage of high achievement as evidenced by grade point average and number of As and Fs received in a given time period. These data can also be disaggregated by level, such as middle school and high school, and by specific grades.

It is also revealing to review data related to drop-out rates at the high school level by gender and ethnicity. Many districts experience an increase in student enrollment at the ninth-grade level with students entering from the parochial system. Students who have experienced difficulty with school have trouble maintaining the necessary grade point average and number of credits in order to graduate from high school. These students often drop out. Simply looking at student enrollment figures over time by grade level can be revealing. Adding an analysis of gender and ethnicity can produce sobering information. For districts with a number of high schools serving a variety of students, a comparison among the high schools is also a worthwhile analysis.

The extent of this type of analysis is up to you. For this activity, you and the administrative team are the primary recipients of the information. Remember that the intent here is not to lay blame, it is to present a clear picture of what is happening in the district.

The reality of the situation is that students who have difficulty achieving within the system begin to experience problems early in elementary school. By identifying the source of the problem early in the schooling process and taking appropriate corrective action through curriculum alignment, many more students will achieve at higher levels.

It is important for you to have a clear picture of student achievement in the district and a clear understanding of how the administrative team views this information. Conducting this activity will provide you with this information.

Steps:

1. Prepare a series of charts showing the percentage of students who fall into each of these categories: socioeconomic status (determined by qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch), gender, and ethnicity; attending postsecondary education institutions; dropping out; receiving special education services; maintaining a grade point average of B or better; maintaining a grade point average of D or below; and enrolled in advanced placement courses and receiving a grade of 3 or better on the advanced placement (AP) course exam.
2. Analyze these data to identify trends and patterns.
3. Write a one- to two-page summary of your findings for presentation to the administrative team.

Activity 2.4 Philosophy of Education

Level: Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine what the official philosophy of education is for the district, and determine to what extent that philosophy is guiding instruction and student achievement.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, Section B, pp. 25-30

Any district materials that state a district philosophy of education (most often found in board policy and planning documents)

Estimated Time: Approximately 1 hour

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: This is a reflective activity that is fundamental to determining how difficult it will be to change district practices and enable *all* children to achieve at high levels. As you carefully read Section B in Chapter 2, be sure to spend quality, uninterrupted time reflecting about the consequences attached to the myth that there is one body of knowledge that is most worth knowing.

There is typically a quantum gap between the beliefs embedded in district statements of philosophy, mission, and so forth, and the reality of how schools are organized. Philosophy statements often use language related to the idea that every student in the system can achieve at high levels. In fact, many incorporate language stating that this is a student's right. By attending school, students have the right to expect an educational experience that will enable them to achieve this goal. These statements do not include language that says this right is reserved for White students from families who act as private tutors at home.

The fundamental issues here are to what extent the school is responsible for providing an instructional environment where all children can and do learn at high levels, and what the school's responsibility is if students are not learning at high levels. Historically, blame has been placed either on the student or the student's parents. We have all heard teachers say, "I presented the material, they just didn't learn it." Well, if the material presented required that students had a specific knowledge base before they received this instruction and the students lacked this knowledge base, is it the student's fault or the system's fault for lack of achievement?

Compounding this problem is the growing diversity among students attending public schools. Is it the students' fault if the cultural background they bring to the learning experience is different from that which is traditionally found in schools? Do teachers and administrators in the system expect students to change and assimilate into the present environment or

does the system have an obligation to change, or should both be happening? Whatever the response, shouldn't district formal documents reflect the true philosophy of the system? We believe they should.

The steps in this activity are confined to you. However, you may find it useful to conduct some focus groups with teachers and engage them in a discussion about these issues. The curriculum alignment activities that are eventually implemented must allow teachers and administrators to clearly understand the implications of the fundamental beliefs embodied in the district's philosophy. As an example, if the district makes statements about students being able to think critically, teachers and administrators must be aware of what that means for classroom dialogue and student behavior. Or, if district documents say that all students will have an equal opportunity to learn, teachers and administrators must accept responsibility for seeing that this happens.

If you find large discrepancies between formal written documents and district practice, you can approach this problem by rewriting the district philosophy statement to reflect current practice, or making suggestions to the administrative team about how practice must change to accommodate the present philosophical statements. Whatever way you decide to approach this activity, it should generate candid, thoughtful introspection, and change in the system.

Steps:

1. Read Section B in Chapter 2.
2. Make note of the salient points being made.
3. Review the district philosophy.
4. What beliefs are embedded in the statement?
5. Make a list of them.
6. Which of these statements could be defined as tautologies?
7. Do you agree with Dr. English that these statements tend to enable the district to continue to operate as it has in the past?
8. Does the statement place accountability for student success on the student or on the school?
9. Is there language in the statement that suggests that all children can learn at high levels? Does the majority of faculty and administrators in the district believe that this is so? How is this belief demonstrated?
10. What recommendations would you make for revising the philosophy statement of the district?
11. Write a new philosophy statement for review by the administrative team.

Activity 2.5 Curriculum Development as a Political Act

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to reflect about the concept of equal opportunity to learn within the district. Who has access to knowledge? Who benefits from that access?

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, Section C, pp. 30-32

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Activity 2.5 is closely related to Activity 2.4. The difference is the focus for the analysis. In Activity 2.4, the focus was on the district's written philosophy. For Activity 2.5, the focus is on how the district determines what knowledge is appropriate to be included in the curriculum. Tradition and textbook publishers guide most of these decisions. This activity is asking you to reflect about whether these are appropriate or whether other ideologies should be considered. There is no one right approach here, but it is important for you to know that if the process begins with an acceptance of utilizing choices among current textbooks as the beginning, important basic decisions have already been made about curriculum content knowledge and skills to be taught.

There are currently fewer than 10 major textbook publishers in the United States. Each is competing with the other for a huge amount of money. These publishers' textbooks are more alike than different and generally cover a small fraction of the knowledge in the field. High school texts are generally designed to fit traditional subjects and periods of time. These subjects are linked to state teacher certification requirements that in turn are linked to teacher seniority lists and contracts. In most states, in order to deviate from this format, schools must be designated as alternative or charter schools, or somehow qualify for state waivers from statutes, regulations, and local teachers' contracts. Yet, all of this operates to produce a traditional system where conservatively 20% to 30% of the students beginning kindergarten either do not graduate or do not meet the expected levels of demonstrated competence in fundamental areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics. (For a more comprehensive discussion of national student achievement information, review National Association of Educational Progress [NAEP] results and state proficiency results.)

Traditionally, students are tracked in our schools, and through this practice some students have access to the knowledge and skills required

to gain acceptance into certain colleges and universities, and some do not. If, as the college board has determined, the successful completion of high school algebra and plane geometry are gatekeepers to college entrance, then why are schools still organized in a way that does not require all students to be successful in completing algebra and plane geometry? And why, if this nation has accepted a goal that all children leave the third grade able to read at that grade level, do we still have 20% to 30% of students enrolled at the third-grade level not meeting this goal?

Does the current political and educational ideology operating within your school system support the continuation of the present structure? If it does, what implications does this ideology have for change in the system?

Steps:

1. Read Section C in Chapter 2.
2. Take a few minutes to reflect about the meaning of this section.
3. Write down your thoughts.
4. Identify the filtering screens generally at play in your district. These may include more screens than those referenced in the book.
5. Describe the dominant educational ideology and the dominant political ideology in place in your system.
6. Write a short reflective paragraph about the implications of your analysis of the present situation in your system.
7. What implications does it have for the curriculum development process?

Activity 2.6 Gap Analysis

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine to what extent student outcome indicators have been established for the system, and to determine if these outcome indicators are stated in a way that enables judgments to be made about student attainment of these indicators.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, Section A, pp. 33-34

District materials listing student outcome indicators

Resource materials dealing with student outcomes, indicators, and scoring rubrics

Estimated Time: Variable

Participants: Facilitator

Other relevant staff selected by facilitator

Discussion: To complete this activity, it will be necessary to assemble all district material used by teachers to guide instructional planning that list student indicators of what students are to know or be able to do for all content areas and all grade levels. These materials may or may not be curriculum guides. Just the exercise of collecting the material should prove to be worthwhile. Are the materials readily accessible? Who has copies? Are the materials dated? Were they developed by the state department of education or locally developed?

Review the student outcome statements. Are the statements stated in general terms such as "All students will be able to write for a variety of audiences in a variety of ways," or are they specific statements about what students know and are able to do, and are they stated so that they can be measured and a determination made about the degree to which a student has achieved mastery? Are they developed for each grade level and in all content areas taught? You may want to develop some type of graphic to summarize the status of student indicators in the district.

Next, determine whether the district has a mechanism in place to assess whether students are currently achieving these outcomes. Practice relative to this determination may differ from school to school, grade to grade, and level to level. You are really attempting to gauge the degree of accountability that exists in the system for whether students are achieving what the district says they are expected to achieve.

It is also important to determine whether it is possible to determine if there is a gap between the achievement of these indicators, student by student, and the present skill level of students. For example, is it possible to

determine whether there is a gap between actual student achievement in art at the sixth-grade level and the written student indicators for sixth-grade art? If there is a gap, how large is it and at what specific skill levels?

What you will undoubtedly find is that student indicators that can be measured are not written for all content areas and grade levels. Even in areas where they are written, the mechanism to assess student achievement is not in place. Sometimes districts will indicate that there is a teacher assessment of student achievement, but this is performed individually by teachers using their best judgment rather than by a district-adopted and -used scoring rubric.

As a result of this review, you should be in a position to make recommendations to the district regarding the development of student indicators. You may want to begin this development by identifying those student indicators that all students should achieve at mastery level by the end of the elementary program and middle school program, and before graduating high school. To assist those reviewing the plan, be sure to include specific examples of well-stated student indicators.

Steps:

1. Read pages 33 to 34, Section A, in the book.
2. Review district materials listing student outcome indicators.
3. At what grade levels are student outcome indicators written?
4. Determine whether they are written as general statements or are written so that there is a clear understanding of what students would have to know and be able to do in order to demonstrate that they have achieved the desired outcome.
5. Does the district have a mechanism in place to determine whether students are currently achieving these outcomes?
6. Are reports available in the district that identify the gaps between current student performance and expected student performance of these indicators?
7. Based on your review, develop a plan to identify student outcome indicators for students exiting the elementary, middle, and high schools.
8. Present this plan to the administrative team for review and revision.
9. Identify suggested procedures for the development of student performance indicators to measure the extent to which students are achieving these indicators at the three levels.
10. Develop a series of examples of indicator statements, performance measures, and scoring rubrics that could be used to assess the stated indicators. (These examples can serve as models for future curriculum development work in the district.)

Activity 2.7 Validation Matrix

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide participants with practice in constructing a validation matrix.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, pp. 34-38
Recently completed district curriculum guide
State curriculum frameworks, statutes, and regulations
National standards documents
Local textbooks for content area covered by guide
Various materials published by futurists
State assessments
Local curriculum policy

Estimated Time: Approximately 2 hours

Participants: Committee selected by facilitator

Discussion: In this activity, a select group of teachers chosen by you learns how to use a validation matrix to review an existing district curriculum guide. The activity is designed to enable teachers to see the congruity between what is identified as important by national and state experts and futurists, and what teachers who developed the guide viewed as important. Later, the practice of developing a validation matrix is recommended as a standard part of the curriculum development process. Normally, this activity would take place in the early stages of developing a curriculum guide. Here, we will be applying the process to a review of an existing guide.

Those conducting the review must first learn what a validation matrix is and why the components of a matrix are important. They should understand that the items included in a validation matrix can and should be customized to the district; however, all the components listed on page 35 of Chapter 2 are considered very important, and there would have to be a good rationale for not including one of them.

Of course, for this activity to be most effective, it is important to have all the necessary materials available to the teachers conducting the review. One of the most important sets of materials comes from futurists. These materials are not usually part of the education literature, but rather come from the review of developments taking place in research related to specific topics. For example, the *Economist* is an excellent source of information about future worldwide economic and political trends that will impact what students should know and be able to do in all of the areas associated with social studies. *Discovery* magazine is another publication

that can provide insight into future curriculum needs in the area of science. Be sure to have these types of publications available for committee members.

If managed properly, those conducting the review should leave the meeting as advocates for engaging in this process so that they can inform other teachers about the benefits of conducting such a review. The matrix that results from the work conducted at the meeting may be a useful handout for use by all building administrators.

Steps:

1. Assemble materials.
2. Select staff to participate. These could be staff members who participated in the development of the curriculum guide, although that decision is up to the facilitator.
3. Provide the group with an overview of the components of a validation matrix and explain the purpose of preparing one. Refer to material in the book.
4. Explain that this is an activity that would normally take place as part of the curriculum development process. It is one being considered for future curriculum development work, and this committee will be helpful in making a recommendation about including this process as part of the curriculum development work in the district.
5. Give each member of the committee (they could work in pairs if you so choose) source documents to use in their review of the curriculum guide.
6. Instruct them that they are to determine whether the materials they have support inclusion of the processes, skills, attitudes, concepts, and so forth that are presently in the guide.
7. You may want to prepare a matrix with the processes, skills, attitudes, concepts, and so forth listed down the side of the matrix and the source document category listed across the top of the matrix.
8. Participants would be instructed to place an "x" beside the skill, concept, and so forth, if the materials support inclusion, and leave it blank if the materials do not support inclusion or are silent.
9. Participants should also add to the list the skills and so forth that are identified in the material review but are not included in the present guide.
10. When the work is complete, you should engage the group in a discussion about what they have learned through this process.
11. You also should ask the group for a recommendation as to whether the group feels this activity should be included in future curriculum development work.
12. Write a brief summary of the meeting including what was learned and the recommendations of the group, and forward it to the administrative team.

Activity 2.8 Curriculum Development Myths

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to review three common myths about curriculum development.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, Section 2.4, pp. 41-44

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Activity 2.8 is another opportunity to reflect about the attitudes teachers and administrators hold regarding curriculum development. Dr. English refers to these as "myths." He takes the position that although these myths are commonly held beliefs, they are not substantiated by research. This is another situation where it is important to understand how teachers in your district feel. If there is wide acceptance of these myths, you will need to plan activities to change these attitudes.

The first myth deals with the commonly held attitude that in order for teachers to develop ownership in curriculum guides they must be directly involved in the process of development. In reality, most curriculum guides are developed by a small number of teachers, and they do not consult with other teachers as part of the process. This work typically takes place during the summer when it would not be possible to involve the entire staff. Furthermore, the document that teachers rely on most often is the textbook, and it would be highly unusual for any member of your faculty to be one of the authors.

The second myth deals with the idea that teachers alone know what is best for students. A more accurate statement would be that test developers, whether they are developing state or national tests, have made a determination about what is "best" for students, and these people are far removed from the school system. It is true that district teachers have a better understanding of the context in which instruction takes place, but it is not true that teachers are the only people that know what is best for students.

In the current age of accountability, most central office and building-level administrative staff clearly understand the need to correlate district written guides with the formal student testing program. Gone are the days when educators could ignore test results and accept no ownership for the level of student achievement. However, not all teachers have accepted their role in improving student test results. Some, especially those teaching subjects that are not part of the formal, accountability-testing program, pay little attention to the results. For instance, if the state is testing student achievement in the areas of mathematics and reading, teachers of

social studies and science at the middle and high school levels may not accept accountability for increasing student achievement. Furthermore, if the state testing program assesses student achievement at Grades 3, 6, and 8, teachers at Grades 1, 4, and 9 often do not see how results impact their instructional planning.

It may be useful to develop a survey instrument to assess the level of acceptance among the teaching staff of these three myths.

Steps:

1. Read pages 41 through 44 in Chapter 2.
2. After reading the section on each myth, reflect about whether you agree or disagree with the position taken by Dr. English.
3. Reflect about the extent to which you think the myths are held as "truths" among teachers in your district.
4. How will these beliefs impact future curriculum development work in the system?

Activity 2.9 Constructing Teacher Work Tasks

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to familiarize teachers with the concept of *teacher work tasks* as defined by Dr. English.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, Section 2.5, pp. 44-46

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Participants: Facilitator and a small group of teachers

Discussion: Activity 2.9 is designed to provide teacher input into the development of district curriculum alignment documents. Dr. English refers to these documents as *teacher work tasks*. The primary purpose of these documents is to tell teachers what to do, under certain conditions, using specific materials with the objective of achieving specified results. Teachers are the primary audience for these documents, and teachers are busy people. The documents must be user friendly or they will be placed on shelves and forgotten. Involving teachers in designing the format for these documents increases their chances of being used.

Because most teachers do not think about curriculum guides as documents that specify teacher work tasks, you will need to provide those assisting you in this project not only with an overview of the curriculum alignment process but with a comprehensive orientation about what a document specifying teacher work tasks should do. The teachers serving on this committee should have a good understanding of the district and the needs of the teachers who will use the guide. You may want to use teachers who have not been involved in previous activities so that you are continuing to expand the number of teachers who are involved in the overall curriculum alignment work.

Be sure to spend an adequate amount of time exploring their feelings about the sophistication and knowledge level of teachers in the content area for which the guide is being developed. It is very important that the format of the guide provide the necessary information teachers will need to make good use of the guide yet avoid including information teachers will not find useful. It is also important to include a discussion about the skill level of students, referencing any known, unique needs they may have.

Those serving on this committee should know that the results of their work will be shared with the administrative team and will provide critical input to the finalization of the curriculum guide format the district will use in the future.

Steps:

1. Select a small group of teachers to participate in this activity. If possible, include one representative from each building. If the content area of the next curriculum alignment project has been identified, choose teachers with expertise in this area. These same teachers, along with others, would then be invited to serve on the large curriculum alignment committee. It is recommended that the committee have representation for K-12 or K-8 if the proposed alignment guide will cover those levels.
2. Explain to the committee that this is a preliminary meeting in preparation for a district curriculum alignment project.
3. Introduce the committee to the major curriculum alignment concepts.
4. Summarize pages 44 through 46, and provide this summary to the teachers as a handout.
5. Engage the committee in a discussion about the difference between *teacher work tasks* and *student objectives* as a first step in the development of curriculum.
6. Solicit the assistance of committee members in determining the degree of specificity they would recommend for writing teacher work tasks. Work tasks should tell the teacher what to do, describe the circumstances under which the tasks will be performed, specify the materials to be used, and describe the results to be attained.
7. Remind them that the degree of specificity is dependent on the following:
   a. The sophistication and knowledge level of staff
   b. The type of content that has been selected
   c. The extent of the staff's dependence on access to critical facilities such as labs, libraries, computer, and so forth
   d. The presence and availability of appropriate materials such as textbooks and other supplementary materials
   e. The expectations of achievement as embodied in local, state, or national tests/exams
   f. The range of diversity of the pupil population and any special requirements they may possess to engage in successful learning
8. Summarize the recommendations made by this group, and tell them these recommendations will be shared with the administrative team and be incorporated into the design of the curriculum alignment project.

Activity 2.10 Suggested Curriculum Alignment Guide Format

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to develop a suggested format for future curriculum alignment guides developed in the district.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 2, pp. 46-61

Any board policies, district plans, or regulations that provide information about what should be included in curriculum guides

A sampling of exemplary curriculum guides available from learned societies, state departments, Internet connections, or other school districts

A sampling of curriculum guides previously developed in the district

Estimated Time: 1½ hours

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: You are now prepared to make a recommendation about the proposal curriculum guide format to be used in the district. You have a thorough knowledge of how this process has worked in the past. You have sought the advice of knowledgeable stakeholders. You have carefully reflected about teacher attitudes toward curriculum development and implementation, and you have taken into consideration the belief system and educational philosophy of the district.

Given all of this important information plus the suggestions offered in the book regarding essential elements in curriculum guides, it is time to come forward with a recommended format and an example of what a guide would look like using this format. It is always easier to understand how the guide will look if you have a model. This model does not have to be complete, but it should contain enough information to enable those reviewing the format to clearly see what would be included in the guide and the level of specificity of the material.

It is highly recommended that the format include some way to quantify the amount of instructional time that will be necessary for the full implementation of the guide. Because this is an unusual item to find in guides, this section will require some explanation. The documents presented for consideration should include whatever narrative explanations are necessary so that a teacher could be handed the document, read it, and understand what is being proposed.

Steps:

1. Review assembled examples of curriculum guides.
2. Note the characteristics of guides that you feel are worthwhile.
3. Read pages 46 through 61 in Chapter 2.
4. Make notes regarding your ideas about what makes curriculum guides user friendly.
5. Determine what you think should be the critical elements of a curriculum guide.
6. Pay special attention to the sample curriculum guide format on page 60.
7. Decide how you feel about including the component of estimated time in your proposed format. It is highly recommended that you include it. This item serves to keep the guide "lean and mean" and deliverable given the context of the district.
8. Develop a sample of what a guide would look like using your proposed format.
9. Present it to the administrative team and selected faculty.
10. Modify it based on feedback.

Summary

This chapter has been devoted to bringing you to the point where the actual curriculum development process can begin. Because your district is unique, the activities have been designed to cause you to think about *how* it is unique so that the formal process is customized and yet incorporates the curriculum alignment ideas discussed in Chapter 2 of *Deciding What to Teach and Test*.

3

Frontloading/Backloading

You will recall that the term *quality control* refers to the congruence among the written, taught, and tested curriculum. To ensure that there is quality control it is helpful to employ the concepts of *frontloading* and *backloading*. The use of these terms should become part of the common vocabulary of all educators in the district. Both practices work well as guides to the development of curriculum, although it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both. For the frontloading process to be most effective, the district should be in charge of specifying what is included in the curriculum and specifying the assessment measures to be used to determine student achievement. If the student assessment measures are determined at the state level, it is recommended that the curriculum development process begin with a backload and then be supplemented with a frontload.

Chapter 3 Activities

After completing the activities included in this chapter, a person charged with the responsibility of facilitating the curriculum alignment process would be able to meet the following objectives:

1. Understand the concepts of *frontloading* and *backloading*.
2. Apply these concepts to an analysis of the curriculum development process used in the district.
3. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of backloading and frontloading.
4. Develop documents to summarize the district testing program, the degree of alignment between the written curriculum and the state testing program, and the degree of alignment between textbooks and mandated tests.

5. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the present mandated district testing program.
6. Design a curriculum development process using both frontloading and backloading.

Activity 3.1 Frontloading/Backloading

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to become aware of the concepts of *frontloading* and *backloading* when applied to the development of curriculum and to determine past district practice as it relates to these concepts.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test,* Chapter 3, pp. 63-83
Videotape: 23:32 to 31:53
Curriculum development procedures used in the past

Estimated Time: 1½ hours

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Completing Activity 3.1 will enable you to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concepts of frontloading and backloading. By reading all of Chapter 3 and watching the videotape, you are provided with a general overview of the concepts and how they relate to district textbook analysis, test review, and curriculum development.

There is a lengthy discussion in this chapter about the idea of "teaching to the test." You not only need to gain an understanding of how other professional staff in the district feel about this idea but you also need to examine your own feelings about this practice. Many teachers currently employed in the United States were trained and began their teaching careers long before state testing became an accountability measure. Districts routinely gave students norm-referenced tests, but the results of these assessments were commonly considered confidential. Sometimes these results were not even shared with building principals. On occasion, district average scores were shared with the board. Individual student scores were used to determine whether a student would qualify for special services such as Title I (Chapter 1) or be invited to join the district's gifted and talented program. It was not unusual for a parent or teacher to have to sign a formal request to see individual student results.

As the accountability movement gained momentum, it became increasingly common for the local press to request test results and publish these results, building by building. Teachers working in buildings with high percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch were often embarrassed by this public display of information, which seemed to give the impression that the teachers working in these buildings were not doing their jobs. As time went on, and more attention was given to test results by business and government leaders, the reputation of

public education began a downward turn from which it has not recovered. In fact, education became the whipping boy for many of the ills facing our society. In an effort to convey to the public that many factors were affecting student achievement results, educators began to point out that there were many issues beyond the control of the school that were causing the problem, such as a lack of parental support, a lack of stability of the family, economic issues impacting the availability of jobs, and the growing cultural diversity of the student population. Unfortunately, in their response, educators tended not to look at internal curriculum alignment problems as an additional cause of the problem. The public was receiving information that said to them, "Students are not learning the skills they need to function effectively as adults," and teachers were saying, "It's not our fault, it's society's problem." Now, we have come to accept the fact that lack of student achievement is not just a problem of society or bad teaching. Part of the problem is in a lack of alignment between what is taught and what is tested. In fact, there is a plethora of research to document that when this alignment is in place, students learn at high levels, and their learning is documented by the results on tests. The practices of frontloading and backloading are ways to approach achieving internal curriculum alignment.

It will be necessary for you to talk with the appropriate staff so that you can determine the extent to which these two procedures have been applied in the curriculum development processes used in the past. In these conversations, attempt to determine the extent to which backloading has been used. Also determine whether there is a general understanding of this concept among the professional staff. If possible, seek information about how teachers and administrators feel about this way of developing curriculum.

This is another time when it may be useful to you to develop a simple questionnaire to assess administrator and teacher knowledge and attitudes toward these concepts. These data could be disaggregated by building, level (elementary, middle, and high school), and department. This information will be useful to you in determining the type of professional development staff will need. Teachers in one department or at one school may have a good understanding of the concepts, whereas teachers in other buildings or departments may not.

Too often, teachers are simply handed a new curriculum without an understanding of how and why it contains what it does and how it was developed. You may also find that the variance in knowledge and attitude falls along lines related to teacher seniority. More senior teachers in the district may be well versed in these concepts, and newly hired staff may not, or this could be reversed: newly hired staff may be more knowledgeable about the concepts of frontloading and backloading.

Steps:

1. Play the videotape: 23:32 to 31:53, ending with the statement "It has helped me to be a more organized teacher."
2. Reflect about your understanding of the terms *frontloading* and *backloading*.
3. Read pages 63 to 83 in Chapter 3.
4. Review the procedures used in the district to develop curriculum.
5. Were these procedures basically a frontload, a backload, or a combination of both?
6. What is your perception of the attitude of teachers regarding these two concepts? Do teachers accept the concept of backloading as a useful way to design district curriculum? Why or why not? Do teachers accept the concept of backloading as a useful way to design classroom instruction (their own lesson plans)? Why or why not? What is the degree of congruence between these two positions?
7. Do teachers accept the concept of frontloading as a useful way to design district curriculum? Why or why not? Do teachers accept the concept of frontloading as a useful way to design classroom instruction (their own lesson plans)? Why or why not? What is the degree of congruence between these two positions?
8. What are the implications for future curriculum development activities based on your response to the previous two steps? Write out these implications and the strategies you would need to employ to gain teacher acceptance and understanding of both concepts.

Activity 3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Frontloading and Backloading

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to identify the advantages and disadvantages for your school system of employing the practice of frontloading and backloading in the design of written district curriculum documents.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 3, pp. 63-83
Videotape: 31:53 to 35:15

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: By spending time reflecting about the advantages and disadvantages of frontloading and backloading, you will be in a better position to respond to questions regarding these practices. You can be assured that they will ultimately come. It will be important for you to have a sound, logical argument for beginning a curriculum development project in an area tested by state assessments with backloading activities.

The idea of schools being accountable for student achievement is very close to individual teacher evaluation, and there may be concerns that teacher salary increases might be attached to student achievement. This is a practice teacher unions have strongly opposed for a variety of legitimate reasons. Using the school as the measure of accountability, and not the individual teachers, has helped dispel this fear.

What do you view as the advantages and disadvantages of frontloading and backloading? Be sure that you understand those listed in the chapter. There may be other advantages and disadvantages you can identify for your district. Be sure to include these on your list. These may differ at various buildings. You may want to consider adding questions to the survey suggested in Activity 3.1 or, if you feel there is a good understanding of the concepts in the district, you may want to develop a survey dealing specifically with advantages and disadvantages of frontloading and backloading. This type of activity will not only provide you with important information, it will also provide a mechanism to alert teachers that these procedures are under consideration for use in the district.

Steps:

1. Play the videotape: 31:53 to 35:15, ending with the statement ". . . so alignment is built in."
2. List the advantages and disadvantages of frontloading identified on the videotape.
3. Reread relevant sections of Chapter 3.
4. List additional advantages and disadvantages of frontloading identified in the chapter.
5. Reflect about the context of your district. What additional advantages and disadvantages would you add given the status of the written, taught, and tested curriculum in your state?
6. Replay the videotape.
7. List the advantages and disadvantages of backloading identified on the videotape.
8. Reread relevant sections of Chapter 3.
9. List the advantages and disadvantages of backloading identified in the chapter.
10. Reflect about the context of your district. What additional advantages and disadvantages would you add given the status of the written, taught, and tested curriculum in your state?
11. Prepare a short presentation to explain these concepts and the advantages and disadvantages of both for presentation to the administrative team and building principals. Engage both groups in a discussion about the implications for future curriculum design work in the district.

Activity 3.3 Present District Testing Program

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to develop a matrix detailing the tests that are part of the present, formal testing program.

Materials: Testing materials that are currently part of the present, formal district testing program

Estimated Time: Depends on the size and sophistication of the district

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: Every district has a testing program beyond teacher-made tests. Some of these tests are optional, and some are mandatory. Typically, the testing program measures a very narrow part of the delivery of instruction. This activity is designed to enable you to prepare a simple, clear picture of both the optional and formal district testing programs.

Begin by assembling information about all of the tests currently administered in the district. You may decide to develop several charts, one for each content area assessed, or you may decide to include all of the tests on one chart. It may also be useful to develop a chart for formal district testing at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. All of these decisions are ones you are free to make. The objective is to develop a set of materials that will clearly explain the scope of the testing program.

In this activity, it is suggested that you include information about the content area being assessed and the type of test used. The additional information suggested for inclusion can be modified based on your preference. Publisher, norming year, and population used for norming purposes can be useful, especially if the student population in your district differs from the population used to norm the test.

It should be immediately clear that the formal district testing program measures only a small portion of the district's instructional program. Commonly, there is little testing prior to Grade 3 and beyond Grade 10 in most districts. The most common areas to test are reading, mathematics, and writing. Even within these content areas, the skills tested usually represent a small portion of all that is taught. The good news is that it should be relatively easy to backload from the tests and be sure that what is assessed is included in the district core curriculum. The bad news is that if scores are low on these tests, it could mean that student achievement in areas that are not tested at all is also not good.

For instance, we know that when instruction is devoted to mainly the teaching of facts, and teacher-made tests ask for a regurgitation of those

facts, there is little long-term retention of the information learned. However, if students are asked to learn skills they can apply again and again, and if they use those skills often, then retention is high. Although it may be difficult for a child to learn to ride a two-wheeler bike, once the skill is internalized, the child can ride almost any bike for the rest of his or her life. Once a child learns to read, the skill is applied throughout a lifetime. Remembering the elements on the periodic chart may once have been necessary for passing high school chemistry, but if a student never uses this knowledge, the student is likely to forget most of the names rather quickly. Becoming aware of the type of assessment used can be another critical component of this analysis.

The final analysis included in this activity is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the present district testing program. This information will be useful as you develop plans to design or secure additional assessments so that the district can move to a position where information about student achievement on the entire core instructional program is available.

Steps:

1. Familiarize yourself with all of these materials.
2. Develop a matrix listing the name of the tests, the content area tested, the type of test (multiple choice, performance event, whether the test is a norm-referenced test or a criterion-referenced test, etc.—be as specific as possible), the test publisher, norming year if appropriate, and type of student population used for norming. Add additional information you feel would be important for staff and administration to know.
3. Analyze the chart to determine the extent of the entire instructional program that is assessed.
4. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the present district testing program.

Activity 3.4 Degree of Alignment: Curriculum to Test

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine the degree of design alignment that exists between the written curriculum in the district and the state test.

Materials: Test specifications for mandated state and district tests

Curriculum guides for areas assessed on mandated tests

Estimated Time: Depends on size and sophistication of district personnel and the availability of materials

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: This activity is designed as an initial backload. You are trying to determine the degree of alignment that presently exists between the district's core curriculum and the state assessment system. You should begin this activity with one content area and at one level, such as elementary. Assuming you choose to do it in the area of language arts, and assuming that the first formal district assessment is in the spring of the fourth grade, you would need all of the curriculum guides K-4 and all of the background information available describing test development, format, and so forth. If the test has been administered for a period of time, you should be able to receive copies of the format for all of the reports you can receive. Often, these reports will list the subskills assessed in each content area and the number of questions on the test to assess each subskill. District summary sheets will also provide you with information about how many students attempted each item and the number who attempted who answered each question correctly and the number who did not. Your analysis should begin with identifying those skill areas where the largest number of students missed the item. Next, review the listing of objectives tested that is produced by the test publisher. How is this skill described in the listing of objectives? Now review any documentation you have that lists sample test items. Try to find an example of a test item for the skill you are exploring. If you find a test item, analyze it and make a list of what a student would need to know and be able to do to successfully answer the test item. This is an important activity because there are many additional skills students have to be able to perform in order to answer test items correctly. The readability of the item itself is important. If the readability is at the fourth-grade level, students who are not reading at that level will have difficulty with the item. Does the language used in the item include vocabulary words that the student must know? Common words used in these items

can refer to amount or order (e.g., more, less, before, after). Is there more information provided in the test item than the student needs to answer the question? This calls for the student to be able to determine what information is important and what is not relevant. This is a higher-order thinking skill. Does answering the question require that the student have a particular knowledge base or be familiar with particular cultural or historical events? One item a facilitator reviewed for social studies required students to understand the use of cross-country tennis shoes. Not all fourth graders may have been exposed to this information. Test item analysis causes you to because aware of these nuances.

Once you have determined all of the skills students would need to have to successfully answer the question, turn your attention to the curriculum guides. Begin with an analysis of the curriculum guide for the fourth grade. Are the skills tested included in the guide at the level of specificity required to enable teachers to design instruction to teach the skills? Repeat this procedure until you have completed this analysis for all of the skills assessed on the test.

Now you should be in a position to do an item analysis to determine if the required preskills are being taught prior to fourth grade. This will require that after the preskills are identified, you review the prior year's curriculum guides to determine whether the preskills are taught at the appropriate level.

This careful analysis will provide you with the information you need to construct a matrix that summarizes the match between the assessment and the district curriculum.

Steps:

1. Read test specifications for all of the tests mandated by the state or district and used as a school/district accountability measure.
2. Make a list of the content areas assessed.
3. Within each of these content areas, make a list of the skill areas assessed (e.g., mathematics skills areas might include basic operations and problem solving).
4. Note the grade levels where these assessments are given.
5. Note the date when the tests are administered.
6. Identify the number of questions in each subskill area.
7. Develop a matrix showing these data for K-12 or each content area assessed.
8. Review the listing of objectives upon which the test is built. This information is available from the test publisher.
9. Compare this list with the objectives listed in the district curriculum guide(s) for each content area.
10. Write a summary for each content area that addresses the degree of design alignment that exists between the district's written curriculum

and the tested curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school levels of the system.

11. Include recommendations for addressing design alignment problems.
12. Present this summary to the administrative team.

Activity 3.5 Textbook/Test Alignment

Level: Application

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine the degree of alignment between the textbook and the mandated test(s).

Materials: Sample test items in the area of social studies
Social studies textbook(s) for the grade level tested

Estimated Time: 1½ hours

Participant: Facilitator

Discussion: This activity is similar to Activity 3.4, except here the analysis is completed using the mandated test and the textbook(s) used for instruction. It is suggested that the analysis be conducted with a social studies item, but you should feel free to choose an item in any content area you like. Social studies was chosen because it generally enables the reviewer to clearly see the discrepancy between the test item and the textbook.

State-level criterion-referenced test items and national norm-referenced test items are frequently written to assess generic skills that can be applied to any content area. This is especially true for the test items written for social studies. Subskills often tested include the ability to read charts and graphs, and multimap interpretation. Most social studies books include activities and information in these two areas, but the specificity of the actual test items is not congruent with the textbook. For instance, a test item measuring a student's ability to read and interpret a multibar graph not only may expect the student to understand the information provided by the bar graph, but the item may require the student to apply the information to a particular problem and select the most accurate response. The bar graph activities in the textbook may simply ask the student to understand the information presented. Many times, the textbook will deal with single bar graphs or two-bar graphs and the test item will have three bars. The textbook may use multiline graphs rather than bar graphs. Mismatches occur between the test item and the text in both the area of format (context) and level of interpretation (Bloom's taxonomy). At the middle school level, most of the social textbooks are focused on a particular part of the world such as Latin America or United States history. When some teachers have completed this analysis, they find that a large percentage of the book covers content information that is not addressed on the test. Frequently, a review of multimap interpretations and the use of multibar graphs is included either at the beginning of the text or at the end, and there is no consistent reinforcement of these skills

throughout the text. If this information comes at the end of the text, it is highly likely that the test will be given prior to when the material is covered in class.

Most reviewers have found that it is not difficult to find information in the text that can be used to provide both content and context alignment, but it requires teachers to be aware of the specificity of how test items are constructed and requires them to supplement these materials. Our experience with conducting this type of test item analysis has proved very successful. Teachers have found the process easy to do and have been enlightened by what they have learned. No teacher has ever said that they could not modify their instruction to provide both content and context alignment. Rather, they have been pleased to learn exactly what skills are assessed.

This activity can be expanded by asking teachers to create parallel items using their own instructional materials. It takes a group of five to six teachers about an hour to each construct a parallel item, review and critique them, and put them in final form. If all of the teachers at the middle school level did this and used the parallel items in these classes, the likelihood of improving test results would be greatly increased.

Steps:

1. Select one sample test item in the area of social studies. (If social studies is not an area tested by the mandated district or state testing program, select a sample item from the NAEP.)
2. Review the test item. List the skills/knowledge a student would need to answer the question correctly. These could be categorized into the following areas: vocabulary, skills, concepts, and processes.
3. Refer back to the test specifications for this area and identify the official objective(s) being assessed by this test item.
4. Compare these objectives with the list you developed.
5. Does the item require that the students have knowledge and skills that exceed the official objective being assessed? If so, what are they?
6. Repeat this process for two or three other test items in other tested subcategories of social studies.
7. Return to the list you developed for Item 1. Review the textbook to determine where the book addresses the skills assessed. List the page numbers in the text that provide a match with the content assessed.
8. Review the context of the test item (format). Review the context of the material in the textbook. Determine the degree of match between the context of the test item and the context of the instructional material in the textbook.
9. Describe the degree of content and context alignment.

10. Note where these materials appear in the text. Note the date when the test is given. Determine whether the teacher would normally have covered this part of the text prior to the assessment.
11. Repeat the process for the other test items reviewed.
12. Write a prescription for what the teacher would have to do to supplement the textbook in order to make sure that students were prepared to respond correctly to these test items.

Activity 3.6 Critique of District Testing Program

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to critique the strengths and weaknesses of the present mandated district testing system that includes state-mandated tests.

Materials: Summary materials developed in activities 3.1-3.5
Deciding What to Teach and Test, Chapter 3, pp. 63-82
Videotape: 23:32 to 35:15

Estimated Time: 1½ hours

Participants: Facilitator
Committee of district teacher leaders

Discussion: In this activity, you will be using the material you produced with the first five activities in this chapter. You are once again working with a committee of teacher leaders. Through the work of this committee you are developing both an internal and external community-support base for making necessary changes in the district's testing program. If the testing program is narrow, and the committee recommends the development or acquisition of additional assessment instruments, there will be costs involved in financial resources, instructional time, and teacher professional development. You can count on early criticism being voiced that the district is testing too much and valuable instructional time is being lost. Countering this argument by explaining how the tests are integrated into the instructional program and how teachers personalize the instructional process to match the needs of the students with this information will be helpful in dispelling these criticisms. Good assessment is good teaching, and this can be a powerful argument for the expansion of a testing program.

Another powerful argument deals with expanding the areas of accountability for district assessment. The system should be receiving formal feedback about all the instructional programs being delivered. During the past few years, increasing attention has been given to the areas of technology, writing, and critical thinking. All of these areas can be generic in nature and applied to all content subjects. Yet, most districts do not have a program to assess student achievement in all three areas. The school-to-work initiative is another example of a program that has gained increased popularity in recent years. This program is supposed to provide students with the skills and knowledge they will need to make a successful transi-

tion to the work environment. Although most districts do keep track of the number of students who gain employment after completing these programs, few have identified the specific skills to be taught in this program and few have attempted to gather information about student achievement of these skills.

You will notice that the audience for this activity gradually expands from the committee to the administrative team, to building staff, and finally to the broader educational community. This is purposeful and planned. As input is received from each of these groups, this input needs to be reflected in changes in the proposed plan. By doing this, you are reinforcing the notion that everyone's voice can be heard as the process continues. Too often, changes are made that impact the broader educational community without receiving their input. When this happens, there is an increased likelihood that opposition will surface. By gradually bringing each group along, you will indeed find you have developed the critical mass to sustain the changes required.

Steps:

1. Describe to the group the purpose of this activity.
2. Explain the activities you have engaged in prior to this meeting.
3. Show the group the videotape: 23:32 to 35:15, ending with the statement ". . . so alignment is built in."
4. Engage the group in a discussion about the material covered on the videotape.
5. Provide them with an overview of the material in Chapter 3 (pages 63 to 82).
6. Share relevant summary information you gleaned from your analysis of the testing program in the district and the degree of alignment between sample test items and the textbook(s).
7. You may want to consider dividing the group into subgroups of two or three teachers.
8. Assign groups the responsibility to identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing district assessment system.
9. Charge each subgroup with the responsibility to develop draft recommendations for improvement.
10. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses identified by the subgroups. You may want to hold this conversation for three separate levels: elementary, middle school, and high school.
11. When consensus is reached regarding the strengths and weaknesses, ask the groups to share their recommendations for improvement.
12. Continue the dialogue until there is general consensus regarding the committees recommendations for improvement.
13. Share the work of the committee with the administrative team.

14. Seek the administrative team's input. Modify the list of recommendations and share this revised list with the committee.
15. Hold a meeting with building principals and discuss the recommendations. Revise if necessary.
16. Assign building principals the responsibility of presenting this material to school faculty. This process should result in all members of the staff and administration becoming aware of the nature of the district testing program K-12, the strengths and weaknesses of that program, and the recommendations of key teacher leaders, administration, and building administrators for improving the system.
17. Prepare necessary press releases, newsletter articles, and other public relations material necessary to acquaint the larger educational community with district plans for improving accountability practices within the district.

Activity 3.7 The Context of Alignment

Level: Awareness
Application
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine how much backloading is appropriate for the district and design a cost-effective process to accomplish the backloading task, to determine how the frontloading process will be used to complete the curriculum design, and to determine how the frontloaded skills and areas of knowledge will be used to secure or construct additional student assessments.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 3, pp. 83-90
Videotape: 25:45 to 37:14
Information gathered from Activities 3.1 through 3.6
Materials used in Activities 3.1 through 3.6
Other relevant materials and information

Estimated Time: Variable

Participants: Facilitator
Committee of teacher leaders with expertise in curriculum development
Selected administrators
Both central office and building staff (all levels represented)

Discussion: Activity 3.7 is the culminating activity for this chapter. With this activity, you are taking all of the information you have learned from your own analysis of the district and applying it to the design of a curriculum development project to assure congruence among the written, taught, and tested curriculum. This activity is completed with a committee (or committees) of teacher leaders and administrators. You are free to make the determination about how you want to involve staff, whether you will work with one committee for the entire project, or whether you will use a variety of committees.

It is important that the product of this work be a document that teachers find user friendly. Teachers should be able to clearly see how using the document will make their work easier, not more complicated. The techniques used to produce the document should include both frontloading and backloading, but begin with a backload.

All of the work you have completed prior to this activity has positioned you to guide the process in a way so that participants see that the

work is placed in the context of where the district currently sits. Work completed in the past should be used. The process builds on the past and values what has previously been accomplished. At the same time, participants see how the work of this committee will extend and enhance the alignment of the core curriculum. It should be seen as a "win-win" situation for everyone: teachers, administrators, and students. Teachers and administrators should view the document being produced as needed and relevant. You will need to design a method for tracking the work of the committee(s) and keeping staff informed about the progress. Teachers and administrators should clearly see how using the product of the work will assure that the district will be able to document an increase in student achievement of the critical skills and knowledge included in the core curriculum.

Once teachers see how effective the document produced by the committee is in producing these results, you will have been successful in creating the design and delivery of a curriculum alignment process that can be the prototype for future curriculum alignment work in the district.

Steps:

1. Invite teachers with expertise in curriculum development and building and central office administrators to participate. This work may evolve into several meetings over an extended period of time or you may wish to hold two or three meetings over a short period. The decision is yours. The advantage of working with a consistent group for all of these activities is that once group rapport is established, time is not lost orienting a new group about what has taken place at previous meetings. The advantage of having several different committees completing these steps is that more people are involved in the project, understand it, and become committed to implementing the changes necessary to achieve design and delivery alignment.
2. Determine the content area for the activity. This should be a content area assessed with a state- or district-mandated test.
3. Play the videotape: 25:45 to 37:14, ending with the statement ". . . ascertaining the degree of curriculum alignment is paramount in increasing student achievement."
4. Discuss the concepts covered in the videotape. Make reference to Chapter 3 in the book with particular emphasis on pages 83 through 90. Be sure the committee members understand the concepts of *frontloading* and *backloading*. Share materials and information relevant for determining the extent of backloading necessary for the district.
5. Determine the percentage of content and context alignment that exists between the textbook(s) currently in use and the tests, and the percentage of alignment that exists between the district written curriculum and the tests. Repeat the procedures undertaken in Activities 3.4 and 3.5, but expand the analysis to include all grade levels assessed and all public domain or practice tests available.

6. Make a determination about the nature of the written curriculum document to be produced by the committee. This could be a simple backloaded chart outlining the skills assessed on the test that are either not covered in the textbook or not presented in the way they are assessed. It could also be a supplement to the present curriculum guide including the information stated above and other relevant data to be determined by the committee. It could be a comprehensive textbook selection process and accompanying guidelines for the development of a new curriculum guide. Whatever the recommended document might be, it needs to make explicit to teachers the knowledge and skills students must have to achieve at high levels on the district's core curriculum.
7. Assess how well students presently perform on these tests. Review relevant information provided to the district regarding student achievement, and determine the gap between how students are presently performing versus how they should be performing.
8. Develop a coding mechanism for the product produced by this committee to alert teachers to those skill/knowledge areas in which large numbers of students are not performing well. The document produced by the committee may include an appendix that provides suggested teaching strategies for addressing these skill areas.
9. Develop a process classroom teachers could use to identify groups of students most in need of improvement in these critical areas.
10. Design strategies to increase the amount of instructional time available to these students in critical areas.
11. Determine those skills and knowledge areas not assessed by the state or mandated district assessment system that the committee believes is critical to include in a core curriculum.
12. Construct a validation matrix for these skill/knowledge areas.
13. Analyze the percentage of design alignment in the present curriculum guide, and present textbook(s) for these skills and knowledge areas.
14. Make a determination about how student achievement for these frontloaded skills will be assessed. Is a validated assessment instrument available? Is securing it cost effective? Does assessing student achievement in these areas require the development of teacher-made tests? Who will be responsible for the construction of the tests? How will questions of reliability and validity be addressed? How will teachers be apprised of the new tests? What professional development will be required? What format will be used to report student results? What procedures will be developed to enable teachers to use these results to design instruction?

Summary

The activities in this chapter have enabled you to apply the ideas and concepts learned in Chapters 1 and 2 and produce a curriculum document that aligns what is to be taught with what is tested. In the process, both teachers and administrators have become knowledgeable about the concepts attached to curriculum alignment, and they have become directly involved in reviewing ideas and making suggestions for improvement. A solid critical mass of support should exist among a variety of subgroups within the educational community, and you should be in a position to assure the public that all children in the district will achieve at high levels those things your district believes are most important to learn in at least one content area.

In the last chapter of this guidebook, we will take a look at the total district curriculum management system that is in place to help support the implementation of this and future curriculum guides. This support mechanism is necessary to sustain improvement within the system over time and identify those isolated areas where further change is needed.

4

Curriculum Audit: *Internal Review*

School districts have been defined as *loosely coupled systems*, meaning that the connections among the functions performed within the system are not rigid and tight, but rather more fluid and open. The relationships among subjects to be taught, classrooms at a given grade level, and schools in general often go unexplained and sometimes unexplored. Until recently, this loosely coupled system has not presented problems for the traditional factory model employed by our public schools. For many schools, it made little difference whether the subject matter taught in one American history class was similar to the content taught in another American history class in the same high school. Likewise, few paid much attention to the impact of instruction at the elementary level on what was happening at the high school level. If the majority of students seemed to be achieving well enough to obtain jobs when they graduated, and the children of the most affluent and influential were being accepted to the colleges of their choice, no one paid much attention to those students who did not graduate high school, or those who graduated with minimal skills.

All of that has changed with the accountability movement. Today, schools are being scrutinized as never before, and educators in increasing numbers are attempting to implement practices that link functions so that more children are learning at higher levels than ever before. This is not to say that the past practices were bad. Rather, it simply means that as educators we need to be doing more to improve on the successes we have produced in the past.

One approach to this improvement process is through the application of the practice of curriculum alignment. With the past three chapters, you have engaged in a variety of activities that can lead to improved curriculum alignment within your district, but there is more to it. For the most effective implementation of alignment, the district needs to have a curriculum management system in place to strengthen the linkages among the parts of the system.

Chapter 4 Activities

In the late 1970s, a process was created to study the effectiveness of a district's curriculum management practices and make recommendations for improving the process. This process is presently called the *curriculum management audit*. There are many ways to improve student achievement within a school system. This is just one, but a very powerful one.

The activities in this chapter are designed to enable a committee of select educators in the district to become aware of this process and begin to reflect about the effectiveness of the practices presently in place in the system to support curriculum alignment. This process operationally defines curriculum management in a very broad sense, including functions related to board operations, budget development, and facilities, in addition to district planning, professional development, and staff review. After completing these activities, members of the committee formed to conduct this review should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the nature of the curriculum management audit.
2. Understand the basic assumptions of the audit.
3. Be aware of the five standards of the audit.
4. Make a determination about whether it would be useful for the district to engage in a curriculum audit.

Activity 4.1 Understanding the Curriculum Audit

Level: Awareness

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide the curriculum management audit committee with an awareness of the curriculum audit.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 92-99

Estimated Time: 1 hour

Participants: Curriculum management audit team led by the facilitator

Discussion: Participants begin their study of the audit process by becoming aware of how it started. Since its beginning, more than 300 audits have been performed. For a time in the late 1980s and early 1990s, curriculum audits were performed as one of the many services provided by the American Association of School Administrators. This service has now been transferred to Phi Delta Kappa. Curriculum audit training sessions are held all over the United States. In the last few years, more than 60 curriculum audits have been performed, and many district personnel attend training sessions so that they can return to their districts and perform an internal review.

Application of the procedures in a curriculum audit that are conducted internally by district staff is referred to as an internal audit. If the district contracts for a formal curriculum audit with persons conducting the audit coming from outside the system and the state, it is considered an external audit. An internal audit focuses on issues related to curriculum design. Most of the activities you have completed so far would be considered design activities. Design alignment means that there are paper documents that describe the intent of how the curriculum management system is supposed to work.

An external review of the system deals with both design and delivery issues. In this type of review, the audit team is not only looking to see what the design is for the district, they are looking to see if the design is being implemented or delivered. Politically, it is almost impossible for an internal review team to focus on delivery issues. First, internal reviewers would not have the objectivity to make the assessment, and second, stating accurately the status of the delivery may place internal audit reviewers at jeopardy.

This activity also permits the committee to look at the conditions necessary to engage in auditing. There are five of these. It would not be possible to conduct either an internal or external review without their presence. First, there must be a set of standards in place against which the

review is conducted. There are five standards used in the curriculum audit. The process enables the reviewers to look for the gap between the standard and what is presently happening in the district. The second condition relates to the existence of documentation about district operations. The assumption here is that it is impossible for the system to function without leaving an audit or paper trail regarding activities. This audit trail becomes a database for review by the auditors. The third condition relates to the practices in place in the district to accomplish the work and whether the practices are valid and reliable. In order for an external audit to take place, it is necessary for the auditors to be independent of the district. It is not unusual for a superintendent requesting a curriculum audit to insist that no auditor be employed in the state in which the audit will be conducted. This request is to ensure objectivity on the part of the audit team. Independence is the fourth condition necessary for the external review. The fifth condition is objectivity. Although not synonymous with absolute truth, objectivity enables those viewing the system to engage in inquiry about the truthfulness of information that is reviewed. Completing the steps in the first activity will provide the committee with an overview of the audit.

Steps:

1. Create a curriculum management study team. This team will be involved in completing all of the activities in this chapter. The team should include building administrators representing all three levels (elementary, middle, and high school); key teacher leaders, again, representing all three levels; and representation from the board, community, and parents. The membership should include individuals who have worked closely with you and participated in some of the key activities completed in the past few months.
2. Provide the committee with a brief overview of the history and development of the curriculum audit.
3. Pass out literature from Phi Delta Kappa about the audit.
4. Explain that the purpose of this series of workshops is to familiarize the committee with the process and the assumptions on which it is based.
5. Provide the committee with a summary of the work that has been going on in the district during the past several months to look at the curriculum management procedures that are currently in place in the district.
6. Explain that these activities were conducted primarily to review present practices and to engage staff in a dialogue about the strengths and areas in need of improvement of the present system. These activities could be considered part of a preinternal review.
7. Explain the differences between an *internal* review and an *external* review.

8. Assign subgroups of the committee sections of the chapter dealing with the necessary conditions to engage in auditing. These include the existence of standards, the existence of data trails and records, the presence of valid and reliable procedures, the condition of independence, and presence of objectivity. Assign one member of each subgroup the responsibility of facilitating the work of the group. This should be someone who has worked with you during the past few months.
9. After each group has had an opportunity to discuss their section, the group will reconvene as a group of the whole. The small-group facilitators will summarize for the total group.
10. Individual group members will be asked to write a short reflective statement about their initial impressions regarding the curriculum audit process.

Activity 4.2 Understanding Assumptions of the Audit

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint the curriculum management audit committee with the assumptions underlying the standards of the curriculum audit.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 99-106

Estimated Time: 1½ hours (This activity could be combined with Activity 4.1.)

Participant: Curriculum management audit committee

Discussion: In addition to conditions, there are five assumptions upon which the audit is grounded. This activity enables the committee to review these assumptions and discuss whether they agree or disagree with them.

The first assumption deals with the idea of control. Basically stated, this assumption states that control is necessary for the effective design and delivery of instruction. The assumption does not dictate what type of control but does suggest that there will be practices in place that prohibit everyone from doing just as they please within the system. Mechanisms and documents exist that stipulate how functions are to take place. These are viewed as necessary and essential to the functioning of the system.

The second assumption deals with the role of curriculum in the district. It is assumed that curriculum documents exist that specify what is to be taught and what is not included in the curriculum. This assumption states that these documents are important and desired and serve a useful purpose in the system. Furthermore, these documents are purposefully written to provide direction for the system so that there will be consistency across buildings and classes.

The third assumption posits that there are generally accepted ideas regarding curriculum design and delivery that form a foundation for the practices in the system. For example, there is a specific body of literature about how organizations should be structured, and another about the characteristics of an effective school. The two functions regarding curriculum embraced by the audit are that the curriculum should focus the work of the system and that the curriculum should connect the work of the system.

The fourth assumption is that the unit of analysis in the audit is the school or school system. The audit does not examine the operations of individual classrooms apart from the functioning of the school or district.

Because of this assumption, the audit is not seen as a mechanism for evaluating individual teachers.

The final assumption relates to the idea that schools are rational systems, that is, they are goal directed and responsive to changes in stated goals. Few would tolerate a position where schools simply existed apart from trying to accomplish any stated goals. However, some believe that although the design for instruction found in school is rational, the delivery of instruction does not document belief in this assumption. The curriculum audit collects information about the degree to which the system is operating as a rational entity.

This activity, like the first one, enables participants to reflect about these ideas and understand the assumptions embedded in the audit process.

Steps:

1. Convene the committee; review the purpose of the meeting.
2. Read each section of the book related to an assumption prior to discussing the assumption.
3. Engage the committee in a discussion about each of the five assumptions. The following questions can guide the discussions.

Assumption 1: There is organizational control.

1. Should a school system have an organized system of control? For what purpose?
2. What components presently exist in the district that are related to control?
3. What is the function of each of those components?
4. Do staff, administration, and community generally understand this control mechanism?
5. Where does the system break down?
6. How is accountability related to the control mechanism?

Assumption 2: Curriculum is purposive.

1. Why does the district develop curriculum?
2. Does it serve those purposes?
3. Why or why not?
4. Do all teachers in the system agree that the district should have a formal curriculum?
5. What are the different positions teachers would take on this subject?
6. Are teachers in the system permitted to ignore the district curriculum?

Assumption 3: There are generally accepted ideas about curriculum design and delivery.

1. Is curriculum planning worthwhile?
2. Should goals and objectives for a content area be stated?
3. What is the value of engaging in this type of activity?
4. Should curriculum serve as a general workplan for the district? Why? What are the benefits derived from this type of workplan?
5. Can attributes of an effective organization be identified? What are they?
6. Does the curriculum focus and connect the work of the teachers in the district?

Assumption 4: The unit of analysis is the school or the school system.

1. Is it appropriate to use the school or the school system as the unit of analysis for this type of study, or should the unit of analysis be the classroom or individual students? Be prepared to take a position and defend it.
2. What are the centralizing forces in the district or school related to student testing?
3. Does the district have control over these forces?
4. What forces in the system lead to suboptimization? How are they related to curriculum and assessment?

Assumption 5: School systems are rational entities.

1. Should school systems operate as rational entities?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of schools operating as rational entities?
3. Determine whether the committee supports the five basic assumptions upon which the curriculum audit process is based.
4. Write a summary statement clarifying the committees' position on this point and ask each committee member to sign it. This statement will be shared with the administrative team and presented to the board with the detailed plan for the district's future curriculum alignment projects.

Activity 4.3 Standard 1

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint participants with the components of Standard 1 and begin to reflect about the status of the district relative to these components.

Materials: Chapter 4, pp. 108-109
District planning documents such as school improvement plans, district strategic plan, and accreditation reports
District organizational chart
Job descriptions and evaluation procedures
Board policies and administrative regulations related to planning

Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: The first standard of the audit deals with control. This is referred to as the *control* standard. The question being explored is as follows: "Is the district in control of itself?" The reader may be shocked that such a question would be asked. In practice, it relates to how functions performed at various levels within the system are connected to one another.

With this standard, the audit team is looking for clear lines of control from the board to the classroom. When the board approves a policy, how does that policy impact the classroom? If it doesn't, is it because no one is paying attention to the policy or because there is no mechanism in place to support implementation? All school boards have policies that speak to the area of curriculum. One of the control functions within the district relates to these policies.

Another control mechanism employed by all districts is planning. In Standard 1, auditors review all of the written planning documents available. Most districts have strategic plans or long-range plans. Some have building school improvement plans. All of these documents can be sources of control.

Additional documents reviewed as part of Standard 1 include the organization chart for the district, job descriptions, and administrator performance evaluation procedures. The review includes looking at both the design of the documents and their impact on the system as vehicles to support control.

It should be informative for your committee to see what types of control documents are available in the district, who developed them, and how they are used. Once you are comfortable that the committee understands this standard, you may want to engage them in a discussion about the quality and usefulness of the documents they have reviewed. Exploring the question of how these documents support the focus and connectivity within the system can be a useful and informative dialogue.

Steps:

1. As chair of the committee, you will need to make a determination as to whether the committee should work as a group as a whole or whether it should be divided into subgroups. My recommendation is that the work be done as one group to facilitate discussion and understanding. These activities are mainly for the purpose of developing awareness. At the end of each meeting, committee members should have a good understanding of what district materials relate to each standard. They should also begin to understand how various functions within the district take place. Finally, they should become aware of the format of the various documents.
2. If the committee is working as one group, you may want to assemble the materials to be reviewed into a spiral-bound document with a table of contents. The document should be paginated. You will need to make judgments about what to include and what not to because there are many documents that could be included with each standard.
3. Provide an overview of the standard and refer committee members to relevant pages in Chapter 4.
4. Be sure the committee understands the concept of *triangulation* and why it is so critical to the process.
5. Briefly, let the committee know what documents they will be looking at and explain the process for review.
6. For each of these standards, begin with a review of relevant board policy. What does board policy say about planning, job descriptions, annual reports, goals, objectives, and other control functions? Note when the various policies were developed and when they have been reviewed and revised. Explain the process the board uses to develop and revise board policies.
7. Next, look at the most current districtwide planning document. This could be the district's strategic plan, or it might be an annual report required by the state. Note the format. Who developed the report? How was staff involved? Who received the report? What implications does the report have for the design and delivery of curriculum?
8. The order of the review for the rest of the documents is up to you. If you decide to include a copy of administrative job descriptions, the review should also include the evaluation procedures used to assess personnel in these positions. Note the date when the job descriptions

were revised. Do they accurately describe the functions of the position? What specific responsibilities do the individuals in various positions have for the design and delivery of curriculum?

9. You may want the committee to review the organizational chart for the district. This is especially important if there have been a number of changes in responsibilities in the recent past.
10. Engage the group in a general discussion about the materials, and encourage them to ask questions. Continue the dialogue until they are comfortable with their understanding of the standard, the documents, and the implications for curriculum design and delivery.

Activity 4.4 Standard 2

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint participants with the components of Standard 2 and begin to reflect about the status of the district relative to these components.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 109-110
Curriculum guides developed in the district during the past 5 years
District textbook selection process
District curriculum development plan

Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: Standard 2 is called the *direction* standard. Some of the questions explored with this standard include the following: Where is the district headed with its curriculum? How effective are curriculum documents in supporting teacher instructional planning and curriculum alignment? How does the district determine what changes need to be made in the curriculum? How are the changes developed and implemented in the classroom? What procedures are used to select new textbooks or supplemental instructional materials?

Board policies may dictate how these processes should be conducted, or these procedures may be embedded in administrative regulations. In some cases, there are no policies or regulations providing guidance for curriculum development. In most districts, the specific process used is often dependent on who is in charge of the committee that is performing the work. Many of the activities suggested in this guidebook relate specifically to Standard 2. You should be able to enhance the committee discussion by sharing materials that have been developed by completing previous activities.

Steps:
1. The procedure used to review these documents will be quite similar to those employed in the review of materials relative to Standard 1.
2. Provide an overview of the standard and refer committee members to relevant pages in Chapter 4.
3. Briefly, let the committee know what documents they will be looking at and explain the process for review.

4. Review board policies dealing with the curriculum planning and development process. Do the policies specify how these processes will take place? Who sets the specific procedures? Are there board policies that specify specific content to be taught or content areas to be included in the curriculum of the district? Does the board review and adopt curriculum each year? Are there board policies specifying how textbooks will be reviewed and selected? How are the committees selected? Who serves on the committees? Are there board policies that specify the process for filing a complaint about instructional materials? Note the date when the policies were developed and revised.
5. Introduce the committee to the five areas auditors use to rate and rank curriculum guides. Encourage them to look for these items in the guides provided. You may want to include different guides in each member's packet of materials. After reviewing the guide, they could discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the guides, based on this very cursory review. Explain that in the regular curriculum review process, there are procedures reviewers go through to ensure interrater reliability.
6. Other documents that could be reviewed include annual curriculum reports, the district multiyear curriculum development plan, or procedures for implementing new programs.
7. Engage the group in a general discussion about the materials. Encourage them to ask questions. Continue the dialogue until they are comfortable with their understanding of the standard, the documents, and the implications for curriculum design and delivery.

Activity 4.5 Standard 3

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint participants with the components of Standard 3 and begin to reflect about the status of the district relative to these components.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 110-111

Professional development plans, technology plans, and so forth

Procedures or documents that specify processes for ensuring consistency in the district

Documents that explain how students with the greatest needs are ensured appropriate resources

Board policies and administrative regulations related to professional development, equity, and equality

Procedures for monitoring the curriculum

Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: Standard 3 is labeled the *consistency* standard. The auditors are looking to see if there is consistency in the district across buildings. Do all students have the same opportunity to learn? Are the curriculum offerings consistent across buildings? Are the facilities sufficient for the delivery of the district's core curriculum?

Questions of equity and equality are dealt with in this standard. How are decisions made about the allocation of scarce resources? Are all children treated as though they have the same needs? If some children have greater needs that require an uneven distribution of resources, how does the district deal with this?

Within this standard, it is common to look at the achievement levels of various groups of students. Achievement data is disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class to see whether certain groups of students consistently achieve at high levels whereas other groups of student consistently underachieve. National data tell us that the achievement level of African American males is typically lower than that of White males or females. It is also common to find that when the curriculum is unaligned, students receiving free and reduced-price lunch score lower on state and national tests than students not receiving this support. Some of these data were collected in activities you performed previously. You

may want to share the results of these activities with this committee. Your purpose in doing so is not to lay blame, rather it is to gain the support of the committee for strengthening the curriculum management system of the district.

Steps:

1. The procedure used to review these documents will be quite similar to those employed in the review of materials relative to the first two standards.
2. Provide an overview of the standard and refer committee members to relevant pages in Chapter 4.
3. Briefly, let the committee know what documents they will be looking at, and explain the process for review.
4. Review board policies dealing with internal consistency, recognizing differences in student needs and practices for the internal monitoring of the curriculum. What policies exist that guide program development and resource allocation for special education students, students labeled as gifted and talented, and students receiving Title I services? What procedures are mandated by board policy to monitor the curriculum? Again, note the date when these policies were developed and when they have been revised. Discuss with the committee the mechanism used to keep district personnel informed about policy changes.
5. Engage the group in a general discussion about the materials. Encourage them to ask questions. Continue the dialogue until they are comfortable with their understanding of the standard, the documents, and the implications for curriculum design and delivery.

Activity 4.6 Standard 4

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint participants with the components of Standard 4 and begin to reflect about the status of the district relative to these components.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 111-113
District reports about student achievement
Description of state assessment requirements
Program evaluation reports
Board policies, administrative regulations, procedures, and forms related to program evaluation and student achievement
Procedures to discontinue ineffective programs

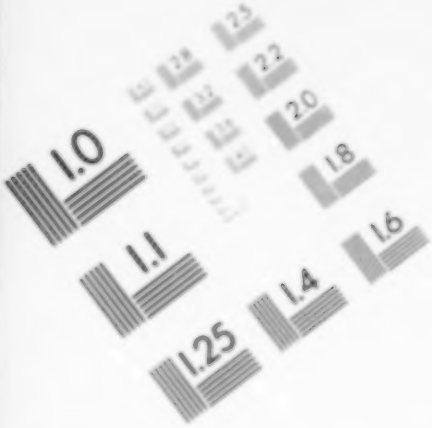
Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: Standard 4 is called the *feedback* standard. It deals with how the district uses student assessment results and program evaluation results to develop, change, or delete existing programs or create new ones. Within this standard, data is collected about student achievement over time. A careful analysis is done regarding how test information is shared with building administrators and utilized by classroom teachers to modify instruction to enable more children to achieve at high levels.

This review would include an analysis of reports on student achievement that are shared with the board and the public. Again, previous activities you completed in earlier reviews of district practices may have generated documents you want to share with the committee. The report detailing the scope of the formal district testing program is a possibility as well as the list of strength and weaknesses of the present testing program developed by your committee of teacher leaders. It is up to you to decide how much information to share with this committee.

Steps:
1. The procedure used to review these documents will be quite similar to those employed in the review of materials relative to the previous standards.
2. Provide an overview of the standard and refer committee members to the relevant pages in Chapter 4.



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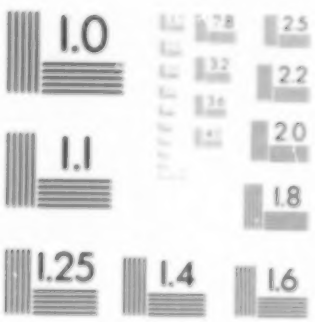

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3. Briefly, let the committee know what documents they will be looking at, and explain the process for review.
4. Review board policies dealing with program evaluation and student achievement. Do the policies specify how these processes will take place? Who sets the specific procedures? Are there board policies that specify the specific tests to be used to monitor student achievement? Does the board receive annual reports regarding student achievement? What is the format of these reports? How is this information shared with building administrators and teachers? Do the reports include information about disaggregated data relative to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class? What district plans are developed based on these data? Again, note the date when these policies were developed and revised.
5. Review program evaluation reports if they exist. What is the format of these reports? When new programs are submitted to the board for approval, does the approval process include a review of program evaluation procedures?
6. Does the district maintain an ongoing list of all the programs that are operating at each building? Are all programs reviewed periodically to ensure that they are effective?
7. How does the district determine when a program is ineffective and should be terminated? Does the district use both formative and summative evaluation procedures to maintain high-quality programs?
8. Engage the group in a general discussion about the materials. Encourage them to ask questions. Continue the dialogue until they are comfortable with their understanding of the standard, the documents, and the implications for curriculum design and delivery.

Activity 4.7 Standard 5

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to acquaint participants with the components of Standard 5 and begin to reflect about the status of the district relative to these components.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 113-114

District documents such as facility planning reports, district strategic plan, and accreditation reports

Board policies and administrative regulations related to budget development, facilities, and annual reports to board and community

EEOC reports

Financial audit reports

Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: Standard 5 is called the *productivity* standard. This standard deals with whether the district is improving over time given the same resources, staff, and instructional context. There is an assumption that the district will be able to document this improvement.

It is within this standard that auditors look closely at how school budget development, physical facilities, and support services support the delivery of the core curriculum. Are these resources sufficient, and are they being used to support this delivery?

This standard has also been referred to as the "so what" standard, meaning that given all of the board policies, plans, instructional materials, test results, facilities, and support services, what does it mean for student achievement?

Steps:

1. The procedure used to review these documents will be quite similar to those employed in the review of materials relative to the other standards.
2. Provide an overview of the standard and refer committee members to relevant pages in Chapter 4.
3. Briefly, let the committee know what documents they will be looking at, and explain the process for the review.

4. Review board policies dealing with budget development, facilities review, and district accountability. Do the policies specify how these processes will take place? Who sets the specific procedures?
5. Review facility improvement plans. Are these plans multiyear in length? Does the budget include adequate projected funds to make the necessary improvements in facilities? Do the facility updates enable the district to deliver the ever-changing curriculum? Are older buildings being upgraded to enable the building staff to use the latest instructional technology?
6. Do district reports indicate that the district is accountable to the community for student learning? Is there evidence that the district is improving over time? What data are used to support this claim?
7. Engage the group in a general discussion about the materials and encourage them to ask questions. Continue the dialogue until they are comfortable with their understanding of the standard, the documents, and the implications for curriculum design and delivery.

Activity 4.8 Self-Review

Level: Awareness
Analysis

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to determine whether your district is ready for a curriculum audit.

Materials: *Deciding What to Teach and Test*, Chapter 4, pp. 116-123
Examples of recently completed audits
Recent district accreditation reports

Estimated Time: 2 hours

Participants: Curriculum management study team led by facilitator

Discussion: Completing this activity will enable you to be in a position to recommend to the administrative staff that the district has the support of this review committee to either conduct an internal review or explore the possibility of an external curriculum audit. Including an activity asking committee members to complete the checklist on pages 119 to 123 may assist them in making this determination. If the committee fails to recommend either one, you need to press them for an explanation. Is it because they do not believe in the assumptions of the audit, or is it because the required conditions necessary to conduct an audit are not in place in the district? Perhaps the committee members do not believe in the standards of the audit: that a district should be in control of itself, that it should know the direction it is headed with its curriculum, that there should be consistency within the system, that student achievement and program evaluation results should be of high quality and improving over time, and that the system should be getting better over time. If committee members take exception with any of these standards it would be worth knowing why. Whatever the position the committee takes, it should be summarized, signed by committee members, and shared with the administrative team.

Steps:

1. Review current district accreditation reports.
2. Review a recent curriculum audit with the committee (each member of the committee should have a copy).
3. Point out that the audit has two main sections: findings and recommendations.
4. Findings are organized around the five standards of the audit.

5. The "findings" section not only documents what the audit team found in the district but also what the audit team expected to find.
6. The recommendation section is not organized by standard.
7. Recommendations are listed in order of priority.
8. Each recommendation is divided into two sections: recommendations for actions by the board and recommendations for actions by the administration.
9. After the committee has had a chance to briefly review an audit report, pass out copies of the checklist that appears on pages 119 through 123. Ask committee members to complete the checklist to the best of their ability.
10. Discuss the committee's responses. Determine whether the committee believes that the district is ready for a curriculum audit.
11. Determine if the committee favors an internal audit or an external audit.
12. Summarize the position of the committee and present this information to the administrative team.

Summary

The activities in this chapter were designed to enable a committee of teacher and administration leaders to explore the possibility of conducting either an internal or an external curriculum audit. Listening to the dialogue and watching the verbal and nonverbal communication patterns during these discussions will provide you with a great deal of insight into how this committee views the curriculum management system in the district.

If the members of the committee seem interested in the idea, there are many opportunities to gain additional information. One is to secure the curriculum auditing video produced by *The Video Journal of Education*, another is to attend training sessions sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa.

The committee may decide that they are not interested in this type of activity: That is fine, too. You should not press for them to explore this type of study. The reason for including the activities in this chapter is to make them aware of the curriculum audit.

Conclusion

You have now completed all of the activities suggested in this handbook to develop an understanding of the concepts related to curriculum alignment and their adaptation to your school district. Because of your work, you are now in a strong position to guide future curriculum development activities to ensure that there is congruence among the written, taught, and tested curriculum. Because of your knowledge and skills, students in your district will undoubtedly demonstrate higher levels of achievement, teachers will feel more secure in knowing that they are teaching the skills included in the district core curriculum, and parents will be confident that the instructional program delivered throughout the system is one that will prepare children to function effectively in the 21st century.

Good luck!

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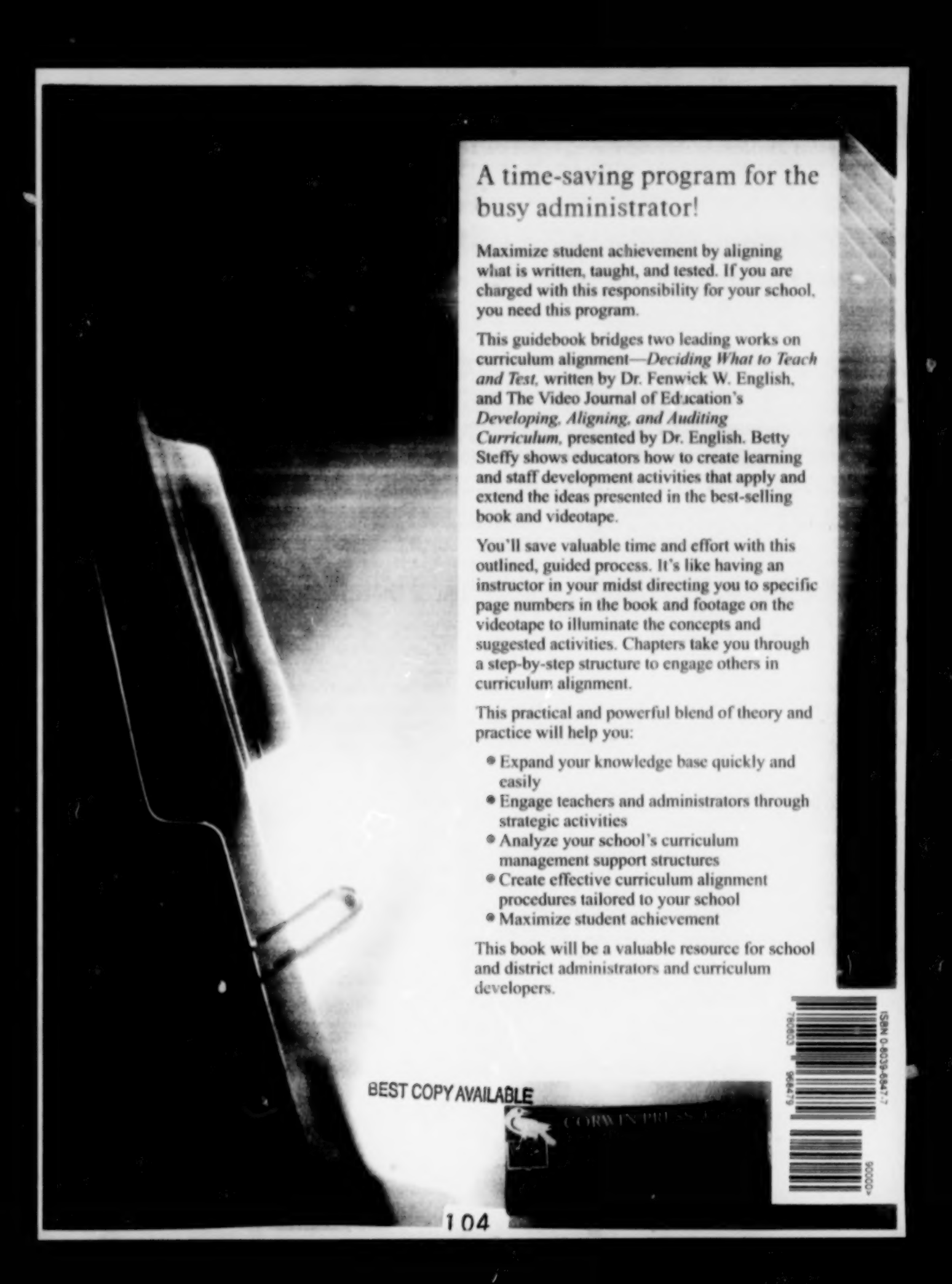

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